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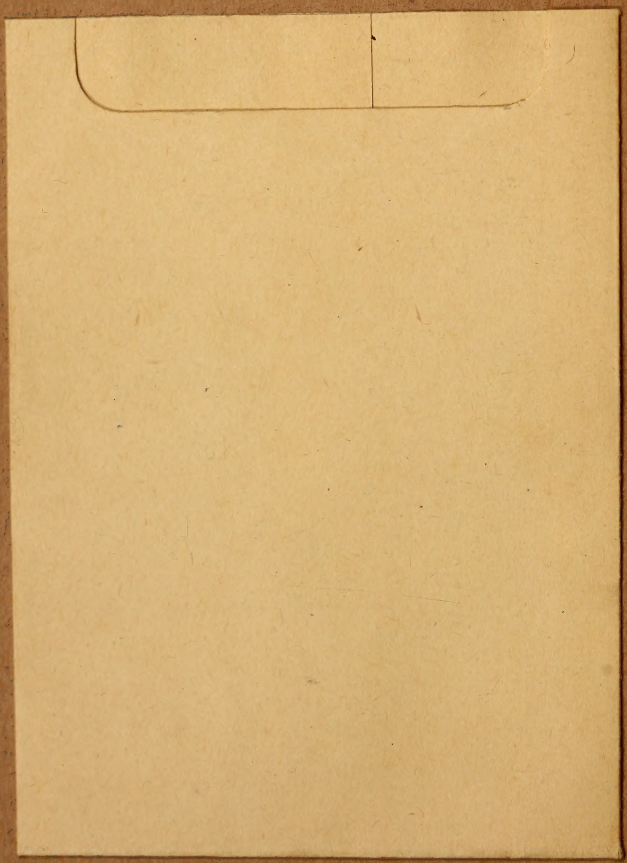

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Wild Bill Hickok

by

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TO
JOHN WILSTACH

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FOREWORD

IT HAS not been the purpose of the writer to novelize Wild Bill Hickok. That has already been done, and rather effectively. So picturesque was the man, and so astounding his exploits, that it is little wonder he should have fallen into the hands of the fictioneers, who straightway made of him something of a Homeric figure. It has been my constant purpose to find out what was real, and what imaginary, in the tales about him that have been current for upward of sixty years.

Wild Bill was a fascinating personality to all who knew him. The mere mention of his name never failed to bring a crash of brasses from the orchestra. His friends never ceased to chant his praises as an honest man, an incredibly accurate pistol shot, and an individual who was without fear in the presence of danger. This is

a good deal to say of any man, but it must be admitted that these encomiums have a solid basis of fact.

Wild Bill was no common gun-toter. He was not a bad-man, as the West defined the term in the '60's and '70's. That fact should be steadily borne in mind. It may be stated also that despite the implication of his pseudonym Bill never indulged in profane language—although he had a fine voice for it. In the opinion of the great marshals, peace officers, and fighting men of the West—men such as Bat Masterson, Bill Tilghman, and Buffalo Bill Cody, themselves renowned—Wild Bill was the greatest gun fighter and the most famous peace officer of the frontier.

When Sir Robert Walpole said all history is a lie he must have had prescience of certain pioneers who have published recollections of Wild Bill. If Hickok had known intimately all the illuminati of the last frontier who have written intimately of him, he must have had a very varied acquaintanceship. Curiously, writers

now so young they must have been in their swaddling clothes while Bill lived, have reported astounding interviews they had with him—interviews which must have taken place at the cradle side.

A number of border scriveners have claimed to have known him at Dodge City—even to have seen him blot out several "six-shooter sharps" in that hamlet. Now, it is more than likely that he was never in Dodge City at all. He visited the locality as a scout when the only inhabitants were prairie dogs and coyotes, but the town of Dodge was founded only three years before Bill was assassinated, and his goings and comings during this period are accurately accounted for.

Recently, a pioneer furnished the writer with a minute account of how Bill, at crime-wrung Deadwood, sent four desperadoes to their homes on high with two shots each from his brace of pistols—and three of the men named as victims actually served as pallbearers at his funeral! I have sought to expose such legends as these in their proper places. However, all such flights of

fancy emphasize a fact not to be overlooked: if a bad man was looking for trouble at all times Bill was (as Henry James said of that voluptuous little ink-lady George Sand) remarkably accessible.

How many men did Wild Bill kill? Aside from Indians, the estimated number has ranged all the way from fifteen to seventy-five. This does not include the soldiers he slew as a sharpshooter during the Civil War.

The writer would not care to be pinned down to a definite figure. The reason is that, after the computation has passed, say, a dozen, you come upon perturbing doubts and insistent questionings. Buffalo Bill used to count off thirty-five killings on his fingers; but it should be remembered that he never learned the truth as to the "McCanles gang massacre," when three men were killed instead of the ten he tallied. Some fearsome fabricating, indeed, has gone on.

It has, in truth, been found impossible to investigate successfully all the reports of Bill's powder-and-shot activities. There is a legend,

for example, coming from Julesberg, Colorado, which sets forth that he bumped off a "sharp" on the field of picture-card finance; but no verification could be discovered. There is a tale, long afoot, of his having shot a whisky glass out of a man's hand who referred to him, in a factious and familiar way, as Wild Bill. "Mr. Hickok" was the proper and organized custom of addressing him. And, too, a war-jig with guns is reported from Denver, but no facts could be discovered that verify that tragedy. Likewise, an incarnadine affair in a hotel at Leavenworth, when Bill spilled enough blood to paint a buggy. He may have engaged in all these six-shooter stampedes; but, on investigation, they all seem to be little else than skilfully varnished inventions.

It will readily be divined, however, that for a festively disposed individual—one, for example, who couldn't hit a flying haystack with a ten-bore bird gun—to make Bill a target for pistol practice was downright suicide. And that, it appears, is what happened on numerous occasions;

but as to Bill himself, he never missed the vital spot. Luck is enamoured of efficiency, even with pistols.

While Wild Bill was singularly free from those sins of the spirit, vanity and boastfulness, it must be admitted that, in the matter of dress, he had a flair for the bizarre. And, what was not altogether a general virtue of the time, he had an attachment for soap and water. Furthermore, he delighted in broadcloth and fine linen. Yet he dressed according to the mode of the border, not after the fashion and frumperies of the "besotted East." All those who took notice of his attire observed that his shoe leather was ever of the best quality of French calf. But on the plains he laid aside these niceties and invariably wore a buckskin suit and moccasins.

Edward F. Colborn, of Salt Lake City, Utah, lived on the border a good part of the vermilion days that knew Wild Bill. Lately, the writer asked Mr. Colborn for his recollections of Bill's everyday appearance.

"I can see Bill," was the reply, "through the

eyes of memory. Tall, erect, with long brown hair that swept in profusion to his shoulders; aquiline nose, high cheek bones, high forehead. His attire was generally that of the Mississippi steamboat gambler—a long-tailed cutaway coat of dark cloth; wide blue trousers, narrow at the bottom; a fancy vest; high-heeled boots with taps under the trousers; a leather belt with two white-handled 'cap-and-ball' Colts; a white shirt, a string tie, a graceful carriage, a moustache that drooped a little, and a poise and calm confidence that only good ancestral blood could give. He was to that country, the great plains, what John Oakhurst was to the Mother Lode in California in the '50's."

Believing, doubtless, that this might be misleading, Colborn added, "I don't think that Bill ever did a crooked thing in gambling or anything else. Everybody in those days gambled; so did Bill. Poker and faro-bank were the games, and with the cattle trade in '73 came hazard, Mexican monte, and chuckaluck. There were gamblers by profession, but Bill was not of them.

He was a man of little speech. Modesty of manner and avoidance of the limelight were among Wild Bill Hickok's chief characteristics."

Considering the admirable work of the photographers, it might seem unnecessary to have devoted so much space to what his contemporaries remember of his appèarance. Yet while the photography is admirable—and Bill was neither gun nor camera shy—what General Custer, General Miles, Henry M. Stanley, and others had to say of him is illuminating. It may be as well, at this place, to add an interesting sidelight. The writer lately asked Gilbert S. Robinson, who married Bill's step-daughter, what impression Hickok made on him at their first meeting.

"When he came to my home in Cincinnati," replied Mr. Robinson, "and I first laid eyes on the world's greatest pistol-fighter—with his long frock coat and high hat—I thought he was a preacher!"

What the writer's investigations have been able to add to the store of fact regarding Wild Bill is disclosed in these pages. The most dif-

ficult problem encountered was the famous fight with the "McCanles gang of horse-thieves," which took place on the afternoon of July 12, 1861.

It is the opinion of the writer that the mystery of that "renowned slaughter" has at last been cleared up as effectively as it ever will be. The enigma will never, I believe, be wholly solved. When David C. McCanles's own son, Monroe—who, as a twelve-year-old boy, was an eye-witness of the tragedy—is unable or unwilling to give a plausible account of the happening, then one can do no more than make deductions from what facts can be verified. But in checking up Wild Bill's activities other perplexities were encountered—notably how James Butler Hickok came to be called Wild Bill, and the canard that Calamity Jane was his sweetheart. These have been satisfactorily settled. Other facts and fictions have been looked into and suitably classified.

FRANK J. WILSTACH.

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New York, N. Y.

FLIES

CONTENTS

		PAGE
FOREWORD		vii
CHAPTER		
I.	THE PRINCE OF PISTOLEERS	1
II.	ANCESTRY AND EARLY MANHOOD	12
III.	THE MAGNUM OPUS OF PISTOLRY	40
IV.	THE McCANLES MYSTERY SOLVED	59
V.	WARTIME ADVENTURES	78
VI.	FIGHT WITH CONQUERING BEAR AND A NEW INDIAN ROMANCE	107
VII.	THE DUEL WITH DAVE TUTT	117
VIII.	A BLUE RIBBON OUTBURST OF GUNS	137
IX.	ON THE PLAINS WITH THE WILSON PARTY	151
X.	MARSHAL OF HAYS CITY AND ABILENE	158
XI.	WILD BILL STARTS A WILD WEST SHOW	189
XII.	TRAITS AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE	194
XIII.	THREE SHOOTING STARS	212
XIV.	A VISIT TO CHEYENNE	228

CHAPTER		PAGE
XV.	Romance and Marriage . . .	243
XVI.	The Calamity Jane–Wild Bill Myth	253
XVII.	Last Days	266
XVIII.	The Trial and Execution of Jack McCall	294

WILD BILL HICKOK

CHAPTER I

THE PRINCE OF PISTOLEERS

FOR the past sixty years Wild Bill Hickok has been accepted on the last frontier as having been the greatest of all pistol shots. For speed in drawing and accuracy in firing, he had no equal. Buffalo Bill, speaking of his friend with whose pistol practice he was through their long association quite familiar, said in his memoirs that "he was the most deadly shot with rifle and pistols that ever lived."

He began the use of firearms when he was a mere lad and it is certain that during the last twenty years of his life there was never a moment when either a pistol or rifle was not within reach of his hands. George Ward Nichols asked

him in 1865 where he learned to shoot so perfectly, and he replied:

"I always shot well, but I came to be perfect in the mountains by shooting at a dime for a mark, at bets of half a dollar a shot."

Nichols, desirous of having this famous marksman give him an example of his ability, told him that he would like to see him shoot. Wild Bill drew one of his revolvers and pointed to a letter O in a signboard which was affixed to the stone wall of a building on the opposite side of the way.

"That sign is more than fifty yards away," Bill remarked. "I'll put six shots into the inside of the circle, which isn't bigger than a man's heart."

And then it was that Bill, without raising his pistol to sight it with his eye, discharged six shots at the mark. It was found upon examination that all six had perforated the circle.

This story by Nichols is ample evidence that it was thus early in life that Bill had perfected his accurate aiming from the hip, which was the wonder of all who witnessed his marksmanship.

Emerson Hough, in his novel, "North of 36," tells of a similar incident occurring while Wild Bill was marshal of Abilene. Mr. Hough, in this narrative, says that "all the army men rated Hickok as the best shot with rifle and revolver that the West ever saw." Yet, he oddly states that while Bill was engaged in spotting the letter O he "raised one of his weapons to a high level and fired." All who have seen his pistol work declared that he fired from the hip. Although Bill was the least boastful of men, he has frequently been heard to say that he never missed a mark. Of course, one should always take with ample sprinkling of salt all such statements reported as coming from him, but it may be that he was amazingly self-assured regarding his pistolry.

When it came to shooting at a human mark, Bill's many pistol battles are sufficient evidence that he was highly proficient—marvellously so. He is credited with killing from fifteen to seventy-five men, but this latter figure would naturally include his slayings, as a sharp-shooter, in General Price's army, as well as his Indian killings.

Outside of his wolf-hunting exploits near his home at Troy Grove, Illinois, where he achieved considerable local fame on account of the accuracy of his marksmanship, the first public test of his ability came when he applied to General Jim Lane for membership in his famous Red Legs at Leavenworth, Kansas. The Red Legs were an unofficially organized troop of guerrilla cavalry enlisted on the abolitionist side to resist by force any invasion of Kansas by armed bands raiding from pro-slavery Missouri. Prentiss Ingraham gives a detailed account of this incident:

"Failing in an effort to secure employment at once in Kansas, whither he had gone in search of adventure, Hickok sought to enlist with the Red Legs. This aggregation numbered some three hundred men, all thoroughly armed and mounted but not having the wherewithal to purchase a horse and complete outfit, he was, greatly to his distress, refused as a Red Leg Ranger.

"A few days after this the Red Legs went out on the commons to shoot with rifles and pistols for prizes, and our youth determined to get into

the ring if possible. To attract attention when any one shot and did not drive the bull's eye he laughed in a satirical way, till at last one of the Red Legs turned fiercely upon him and said:

"'Look a hyar, boy, you has too much laugh—as if you c'u'd do better, and dern my skins even ef yer haint a Red Leg I'll give you a chance to shoot. Ef yer takes ther prize, I'll pay yer put-up dust, an' ef yer don't, I'll take the hickory ramrod o' my rifle an' welt yer nigh to death. Does yer shoot on my terms?'

"'I will, and beat you, too,' was the quiet response.

"All eyes were now turned on the tall, handsome youth before them, for several had determined to try his mettle after the shooting for having laughed at them, and now they gazed on him with increased interest. There were three prizes, viz.: a fine horse, a saddle and bridle for the first; a rifle and belt, with two revolvers and a bowie-knife for the second, and a purse of one hundred dollars for the third. He had some little

money and said quietly: 'I'll pay the fees, for I want no man to give me money.'

"'Then shell out,' the stranger remarked. 'It's fifteen fer the first, ten fer the second, and five dollars fer the third prize, an' ther boys hes all chipped in, an' ef yer don't win, boy, they'll all see me larrup you.'

"All knew and greatly feared the speaker, Shanghai Bill, for he was a desperado of the worst type, a giant in size and of enormous strength and ever ready to get into a brawl. The boy smiled at his words, paid his thirty dollars, which left him with three in his pocket, and after the Red Legs had shot, took his stand and raising his rifle quickly fired. The first to start the cheering was Jim Lane himself, who cried out:

"'By heaven! The best shot in three hundred.'

"'It's a accident; besides, Gineral, ther's two more to be shooted,' growled Shanghai Bill.

"The two more were then shot in the same quiet way as before and the bullets went dead centre.

"'I've got the horse, saddle and bridle toward becoming a Red Leg, General,' said the boy quietly, addressing Lane.

"'You have, indeed. Now see if you can win the arms. I believe you can,' was Lane's reply. These were to be shot with pistols and at twenty paces, the best two in three shots, and once more three dead-centre bull's eyes were scored by Wild Bill. The men now became deeply interested in the youth and watched eagerly for him to come to his third trial, which was to be with a rifle at a moving object a hundred yards off. This object was a round piece of wood painted red, which was to be rolled like a wheel along the ground, and at this three shots were allowed. Just as the man started it in motion, a crow flew over the field above the heads of the crowd, and instantly raising his rifle he fired and brought it down. He then seized the weapon held by Shanghai Bill and throwing it to a level sent a bullet through the red wheel ere it had stopped rolling."

This sounds almost too good, but the same

story has come from various sources much after the same fashion. Indeed, if there was not a conspiracy of the time to hoist Wild Bill on to a purple throne of shining glory as a pistoleer, we may safely accept it as a fact. Buffalo Bill in rating him above Doctor Carver, whom I used to see perform marvels with firearms, gives him the topmost place among pistol shooters. Any man who could out-shoot Carver was indeed a miracle-worker with powder and balls, and Buffalo Bill made this statement at the time when the redoubtable doctor (who was a dentist) was in his employ and likely to take umbrage if he did not agree with Buffalo Bill. And Carver was no patient violet when his own prowess was put in question. He had a high estimate of his own importance as a pistol and rifle shot, and justly so.

There are, however, stories that gained general currency that are too tall for acceptance. One of these is to the effect that Wild Bill and Charles Utter—known as Colorado Charlie—were once freighting supplies out of Wichita.

Utter, somewhat of a wag, had riled a teamster to such a pitch that the angry man hurled a big stone at him, which would have killed him had it hit its mark. But, the story goes, as the missile left the teamster's hand Wild Bill's gun flashed. The bullet struck the stone, and turned it from its course. It was a masterly shot and won the applause of all.

No wonder!

And yet Bill made shots only a little less phenomenal. The late Joseph Wheelock, the actor, once told the writer that when he was a young man he had seen Wild Bill stand between telegraph poles and fire simultaneously with a revolver in each hand, hitting both poles. Another of Bill's feats was to cut a chicken's throat with a bullet from a distance of thirty paces, without breaking its neck or touching the head or body. He was also wont to amuse his friends by driving the cork into a bottle without breaking the bottle-neck. He was able to hit a dime at fifty paces nine times out of ten. These feats are all the more remarkable when it is taken into

account that he fired from the hip without taking deliberate aim.

The old residents of Hays City teem with stories of Bill's pistolry. One day he was walking along the street when he observed a ripe apple hanging on a tree. Pulling two revolvers from their holsters, he shot with his left hand and nipped the stem. As the apple fell his right-hand revolver pierced it with a bullet. On another occasion he was riding in from the fort with General Custer. Bill pointed out a knot on a telegraph pole, remarking that he wanted to see how many bullets he could put in it as he rode by at a gallop. He fired all six chambers of his revolver, and every bullet hit the knot. This telegraph pole was pointed out for many years by the residents of Hays City as an example of Bill's remarkable marksmanship.

During the last years of his life, according to Ellis T. Peirce, Bill used two Colt's-45 calibre cap-and-ball revolvers without triggers. He was a pulse shot. When he grasped the butt of his revolver his thumb would rest on the hammer, and

the instant he had drawn the weapon clear of the holster its own weight would cock it. Bill had only to lift his thumb—and there was another death to record. The hammers were ground smooth so they would slip easily under the thumb when pressure was removed.

Both of these famous guns have disappeared. Wild Bill was wearing a new revolver when killed at Deadwood, a large Smith & Wesson. The ivory-handled gun found on his body was taken by Charlie Storm, a Jewish gun-fighter of Deadwood, when the latter went south to fight Luke Short. But Short was too quick on the draw, and Storm is still down there! Charlie Utter, Wild Bill's companion in Deadwood, took the Smith & Wesson for a keepsake, and Wild Bill's Sharps rifle was buried beside him.

272

CHAPTER II

ANCESTRY AND EARLY MANHOOD

JAMES BUTLER HICKOK, known to fame as Wild Bill, did not indite sonnets. His penchant did not lie in that direction. His conversation, so far as is known, was not a Kimberley which flashed epigrammatic diamonds. He was withal a reticent man. As for letters, there are but few extant. Yet his fame, after his body has rested for nearly fifty years in the little cemetery at Deadwood, South Dakota, is as glowing as on the day he was lowered into the grave by a few devoted friends. And when the history of those lurid times finally is written, Wild Bill and his forthright pistols will supply material for many a thrilling and astounding page.

Fully to understand such a character, it is necessary to be acquainted somewhat with the environment in which he was born. In the mid-

dle of the 19th Century, that vast territory comprising hundreds of thousands of square miles, extending westward from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains, from the Mexican border on the south to the Canadian line on the north was, in the language of the times, a howling wilderness. The howling was done, in the main, by prowling Indians, ravenous wild animals and their victims. It has been computed that, as late as 1869, there were ten million roving buffalo as well as sixty thousand hostile Indians on the plains. For a white man to venture alone into that vast area was a perilous adventure.

The change from wilderness to the present calm began with the discovery of gold in California. Immediately there followed long and hazardous journeys of wagon trains across the plains; the coming of vast herds of long-horned cattle from Texas in search of new grazing fields; the hurried building of the Southern and the Central Pacific transcontinental railroads; the swift annihilation of the immense herds of buffalo, and finally the subjugation of the hostile

Indians. All these stirring events were crowded into a period of thirty years.

During that chaotic time, wherever white men were to be found in the newly inhabited territory —especially at such jumping-off places as railroad terminals, like Dodge City, Abilene, Hays City, and Cheyenne—there thrived a particularly evil assortment of gun-toting gamblers; merry and reckless cowboys in from the vast unfenced ranges for a few days of untrammelled fun and frolic; a plentiful supply of deplorably wanton ladies of dance-hall and bagnio, and the ever-present bad man, whether cowboy, gambler, or outlaw, with his flashing pistols.

There was no such thing as civilized order at the beginning; every man, with his smoking hardware, was judge, jury, and executioner. The quickest and deadliest shot survived the longest. Out of this welter of lawlessness came such good men and bad men as Wild Bill Hickok, John Wesley Hardin, Bill Longley, Bat Masterson, Sam Bass, Doc Holliday, Buffalo Bill Cody, Billy the Kid, Texas Jack Omohundro, Virgil and

Wyatt Earp, Soapey Smith, Pat Garrett, John Selman, Gyp and Mannen Clements, Dick Ware, George Scarborough, and others of lesser note. All of this merry crew, with the exception of Wyatt Earp, have been called in by the Great Spirit. Each provided, according to Owen P. White, a halo of six-shooter smoke of his own manufacture. It was truly an era of hilarious tragedy.

Clark Alberti, at this writing an editor in California, was a schoolboy friend of Wild Bill. He wrote lately that "Wild Bill was one of the greatest men that ever lived." The present scrivener would hardly go so far as that; his enthusiasm does not mount so high. But looking this way and that, much might be said in favour of Clark Alberti's far-encircling proclamation. If greatness consists of an unswerving courage, an unquestioned honesty, a gentle and generous spirit, as well as a willingness at all times to endanger one's life for the sake of public order or to save a friend, then Wild Bill Hickok has a considerable claim to fame. He was, in his time and in his

environment, this country's greatest peace officer. He stood for law and order when there was neither. And as a pistoleer in the presence of bad men running wild, he was the *ne plus ultra perfecto.*

So much attention has been given to the hectic adventures of this cavalier of the border that little or none has been devoted to his genealogy: as to the why and the wherefore of the man. Acquainted with his stubborn and well-nigh foolhardy courage, none need be surprised to discover that he came of sterling stock. Before making this discovery, the writer felt certain that something of a tonic nature would be revealed when the facts were unearthed. Men of Wild Bill's verve do not spring from lean and hungry back-alley ancestry.

So, when it was developed that his father, William Alonzo Hickok, was a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, a worthy man of Scotch-Irish ancestry, all our fondest expectations were realized. At once we discovered where Wild Bill inherited his unmitigated devotion to law

and order, even to the point of shooting up a town and planting a few worthless carcasses in his own private cemetery.

In the presence of the disorderly, his two ivory-handled Colt's-45s, resting handily in their holsters, spelled a short-cut to the tomb to any one who revealed disturbing intentions of breaking the peace. While it is not disclosed that the son of the worthy deacon was attentive to his religious duties, we shall see later on that when he assumed the marshalship of any heretofore lawless town he ran it like a church.

We shall now have a little closer look at Wild Bill's forbears. His father, the worthy William Alonzo Hickok, was born at North Hero, Grand Isle County, Vermont, on December 5, 1801. The latter's father, Otis Hickok, is mentioned as one of the heroes of the battle of Plattsburg during the War of 1812. Otis was one of five brothers who came to America from the north of Ireland.

Young William Alonzo, of a pious rather than a warlike nature, was given a sound education, his parents having designed him for the ministry.

Through overwork—although a powerful man—after graduation he was prostrated with brain fever. His recovery was slow and his illness left his mind so impaired that the past was forgotten. Finally his amnesia left him and his memory was restored. Regaining his health he gave up the idea of entering the ministry. In 1827 he married Polly Butler of his native county.

The young couple moved to Broome County, New York, in 1831, where William kept a store. Not thriving according to his expectations he moved in 1834 to Bailey's Point, Illinois. From there he went to Putnam County, and finally in 1837, to Homer, later called Troy Grove, La Salle County. This hamlet is about seventy miles southwest of Chicago. William Alonzo here opened the first general store at Troy Grove, but the financial crash of 1837 ruined his business prospects. He became a farmer. This worthy and kindly man died in 1852 when his son James was in his fifteenth year.

William A. and his wife, Polly, had six children —four sons and two daughters. Mrs. Louise

Hickok, of Troy Grove, has kindly copied from the family Bible the record there set down:

Oliver O. Hickok, b. 1830, d. 1899.
Lorenzo Butler Hickok, b. 1832, d. 1913.
Horace Dewey, b. 1834, d. 1916.
James Butler Hickok [Wild Bill] b. 1837, d. 1876
Celinda, b. 1839, d. 1916.
Lydia, b. 1842, d. 1916.

Wild Bill's mother, Polly, born in 1804, died in 1878 at Troy Grove, two years after her celebrated son had been assassinated.

In his early youth, Wild Bill disclosed a marked fondness for firearms. It is revealed by those who knew him in his childhood, that when he was eight years old he traded some cherished possessions for a single-barrelled pistol, the fondest desire of his heart. It was a flint-lock, and regarded by him as priceless. He somehow obtained powder and bullets and then began his first experience in marksmanship, in which he finally attained an amazing proficiency.

When he was fourteen years old, he secured an excellent pistol and a short time thereafter his father presented him with a first-class rifle.

From that day he spent the greater part of his time in the woods. At this period the neighbourhood was greatly annoyed by the ravages of wolves, to such an extrent, in fact, that the state offered a premium for the scalps. The boy became a hunter of wolves, with the result that each evening he returned home with a belt full of scalps which were converted into cash at the end of each month.

Some surprise has been expressed by certain worthy folks that young Bill now decided to fare forth into the wilds, imagining that his failure to stay at Troy Grove was owing to some perversity of character. Any man child who does not understand the absurdity of this supposition proves that he has never been a Boy Scout and knows naught of the lure of the woods. Bill's father had travelled by wagon more than a thousand miles to seek a home on the prairie, and why should his son not do likewise?

The magic of the setting sun in that day was in the blood of every man and boy. Those who remained behind longed to be on the move. That

a boy with an adventurous spirit should meditate hanging up his hat for good in Troy Grove is not at all likely.

The question of what to do and where to go must have tormented our hero not a little. Every village boy, even at this day, is confronted by a similar problem, and if he has romance and adventure in him, he will find a way of escape. If Wild Bill had had any notion of gaining a settled, humdrum living in a town —a clerkship, or something equally moilsome—he might well have set his heart on Chicago, only a short distance away, and then a thriving town which had been incorporated two years before he obtained his first firearms.

We learn from Wild Bill's school friends that the boys of Troy Grove were much the same as others of that period. Mark Twain was a boy of the same era, living at no great distance away in Missouri. All the boys of that day were agog with stories of the plains, of shooting and trapping, of Indians, of free life in the open, something that has ever appealed to youth.

For such a lad as Wild Bill, Troy Grove must have been deplorably irksome. His brother, Lorenzo, did go on the plains for a time, but returned to become a surveyor; Oliver was a famous owner and driver of trotting horses—the trainer and driver of the greatest trotter of his day, St. Julian; Horace was a justice of the peace, while James, without disclosing any particular accomplishments, sallied forth to develop into the frontier's most famous celebrity.

The opportunities for gaining an education in rural Illinois at that period were meagre. Yet, with such schooling as he was able to acquire, and under his mother's own tutelage, the boy managed to gain, according to all accounts, a rudimentary education. Horace A. Hickok, the son of Wild Bill's brother Horace, states that his father had told him that "his brother James never started a quarrel; was always good-tempered; was a bright and apt pupil and never behind his schoolmates."

There were not many books to be obtained in

those parts, but we are told that he managed, at the age of fifteen, to lay hands on copies of Peters's "Life of Kit Carson" and of "The Trapper's Guide." These books made such a profound impression on his mind that, in later years, he told a friend he then and there said to his brothers, "One day I'll beat anything that Kit Carson ever did or attempted."

Wild Bill's first employment was as tow-path driver on the Illinois and Michigan canal. It appears that he did not long remain away from home, and the reason for this was that he had had a difference with a man named Hudson. The two engaged in a fist fight which lasted more than an hour. The battle began on the tow-path, the fighters finally rolling into the water. Then followed efforts on the part of each to drown the other. Young Bill, despite the fact that Hudson was a powerful fellow, overcame this advantage by his extraordinary agility and finally won a decided victory. Hudson was taken from the water in an almost lifeless state,

and it was only by the greatest exertion that he was resuscitated. This is the first exploit of his career which illustrates the truth of the saying long current along the border: "Wild Bill is a bad man to fool with."

In 1855, when camped on the sunshine side of twenty, he decided that the time had arrived for him to venture forth into the world. From what he had read and heard, he knew that the territory west of Missouri was the habitation of Indian tribes; a vast area destined to become the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, etc. The Indians in that immense stretch of country comprised the Shawnese, Delawares, Kickapoos, Osages, and other tribes; but Kansas was wild enough in those days to satisfy all his longings. It was, however, neither freedom nor Indians that had attracted his attention, but rather the struggles between more or less law-abiding factions in Missouri and Kansas. Here was a theatre of action that must have had a strong appeal to so venturesome a spirit. Wild Bill was an ardent Unionist and he probably

sensed, as has been said, that the great need of that section was heroes. Somehow, during all his life he always headed for that point where the largest amount of trouble existed; and it was his ardent purpose, backed by his flaming hardware, to put it down and restore the peace.

So, gathering his pistol, hunting-knife, and rifle, he bade adieu to his mother, brothers, and sisters, and headed on foot for St. Louis. He reached his destination after a weary march of many days. To him the city was a marvel, but it was not altogether to his liking. After a few days of sightseeing he longed to tread the road of adventure, and so engaged passage on a steamer bound for Leavenworth. Arriving at that haven he discovered to his dismay that the town was in a tumult and that for political reasons no passengers were permitted to land from the boat.

That didn't bother him any; he had started for Leavenworth and that was where he was going to stop, mob or no mob. He resorted to the expedient of disguising himself as a roust-

about and began to unload freight. In this manner he succeeded in frustrating the angry and suspicious citizenry. He then learned that Jim Lane, the recognized leader of the Red Legs, an anti-slavery organization in Kansas, had recently arrived in Leavenworth from Indiana with a contingent of two to three hundred men.

Within a few days he had joined the forces of Lane, but to become a Red Leg it was necessary that the recruit demonstrate his proficiency as a marksman—which he did in the spectacular fashion already recounted.

For several months he was identified with the Red Legs and came to be recognized by Lane, according to the fable, as "the most effective man in his command."

The records show that in 1857 he filed a claim for one hundred and sixty acres in Monticello Township, Johnson County, Kansas. Although he was not yet of age, his reputation as a fighter and dead shot had been heralded far and wide, with the result that he was elected constable. This was Wild Bill's first post as peace officer.

He buckled on his pistols and announced that he proposed that peace and order should reign in his bailiwick, and it did.

We now come upon a piece of information which has not found its way into the records. During this period Wild Bill married a young squaw after the Indian fashion, which was not regarded as binding. This knowledge I have from William E. Connelley, the present secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, of Topeka, Kansas. Mr. Connelley says on the subject:

"There is no record of Wild Bill's life among the Shawnee Indians. The old settlers of Johnson County, Kansas, whom I interviewed a good many years ago, and who are all now on the other side, gave me what information I have."

This alleged Indian marriage was never mentioned, so far as I can discover, by Wild Bill in after years; but there are other beautiful Indian maidens who will be heard of later on, and of whom there is ample evidence.

But, squaw or no squaw, Bill was not allowed to live in peace on his Kansas homestead. As

a member of Jim Lane's Red Legs, he had administered a severe chastisement to the Border Ruffians of Missouri. They bore him a particular grudge, and this they set about to pay back in kind. In one of their predatory incursions on Kansas soil they burned his cabin. Wild Bill was absent at the time. What might have been written on the ample pages of history, had Bill been on hand, it is unnecessary to cogitate. A new cabin was built and this one also, while Constable Hickok was away from home, was laid in ashes.

Wild Bill now decided that he had had enough of Johnson County, Kansas. A new field of operations was opened to him by the offer of a position as driver for the Overland Stage Company. In this capacity he crossed the plains several times, operating from Missouri and Colorado and points in Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Salt Lake City. That was a lively life for a youth who only a short time before was killing wolves in La Salle County, Illinois, or fishing in Vermilion Creek at Troy Grove.

While he was apparently reckless, his friend J. W. Buel tells us that no man ever covered his routes with fewer accidents than Bill. And we are likewise informed that when nearing his destination it was his habit to treat the passengers "to a shaking up," as he styled it, in "order to jolt the cricks out of their backs." The particular stretch of road that interested him was that entering Santa Fe, New Mexico. There was a slight decline, and so Wild Bill invariably turned the horses loose and gave them the lash. So it was that the big coach bounded along "lurching the passengers from side to side, dishing up dyspeptics, phlegmatics, and rollicking dispositions indiscriminately, and bowling into the town finally the centre of a dust bank and the object of excited interest to everyone in the ancient Mexican city."

Driving a stagecoach in those days was nothing like a cross-country motor journey of to-day. To get away with the job called for a steady nerve and an ability at all times to defend one's self either with fists or pistols. Every station

was located near a saloon and every stage employee was practically an animated skinful of fighting whisky. Desperate rows were as common as waxweed flowers on the prairie in springtime, and the man that had failed to snuff out a life was as a bashful fellow at a country dance—woefully out of place.

Such a condition of affairs did not daunt Wild Bill. It suited him to a dot. And that he was left pretty much alone is ample proof that even then, although a youth under age, he was a dangerous individual to meddle with. But this happy state of peace was arrived at only after several rough encounters in all of which he came off best; and, furthermore, at this time he was considered the best pistol shot on the plains.

But something far more menacing than the ruffians along the stage route now hove into view: the Indians of the Sweetwater broke out of their reservation and started on a rampage. They took to massacring settlers, killing Pony Express riders and, to bring matters to a handsome head, began to attack the stagecoaches.

Having succeeded in this adventure—killing the driver and two passengers—they took to running off the stock of the company. That put an end to the stagecoach business in those parts for the time being.

Then it was that the officers of the stage company sent for Bill. He promptly reported at St. Joseph for a council of war. Nobody knew what to do until he spoke up and, according to the record, delivered himself of the following brief but pointed speech:

"You have enough men here, if they are turned loose right, to clean out all the red devils along the route, and all the men now idle would consider it a frolic to go into Indian service for a short time."

That settled it. Wild Bill was told to go ahead and see what he could do, and when he was getting ready for a fight he was an ardent party. He called the men together and told them what was wanted. Fifty men enlisted with a hearty good will, all promising implicit obedience with Bill as leader. This well-equipped band, under

a commander just twenty-one years of age, started away from St. Joseph, Missouri, on the 29th of September, 1858. Arriving at Powder River, where they expected to find the Indians encamped, they found nothing but dead ashes and tracks that pointed westward. They followed and in three days came upon the Indians at Crazy Woman's Fork. The original band had meanwhile doubled in number and all were painted up and ready to go anywhere they might cause trouble.

Discovering the extent of the camp, some of the band suggested that they return to St. Joseph. Bill told them that he would shoot the first man who turned his back on the enterprise. Here was a force of four to one against them, but that didn't bother the young leader. He had with him a crowd of young dare-devils who, one picturesque chronicler remarked, could be depended upon to fight a ten-acre field full of grizzly bears with only a toothpick for a weapon.

At some little distance smoke in the tree-tops was discovered. That meant an Indian camp.

Bill ordered his men to halt, to give him a chance to locate the game. Alone he made a broad circuit to reach high ground, in order to ascertain the extent of the camp and learn where the horses were tethered.

This was done and a plan of battle devised. Bill ordered his men to rest till nightfall and to light no fires that would serve to attract the foe. At ten P. M. Bill called his men to saddle and gave his instructions. Each man was ordered to follow him into the Indian camp and each to fight only with his pistol; to make for the stock which, being in a corral, would be easily stampeded and run out, and then collected and secured.

These commands, according to the best information, were strictly obeyed. A dash was made for the corral by a dozen of the men, while the other rode en masse into the Indian camp. The amazed savages dashed out of their tents in order to learn what the racket was about, and were shot down before they could lay hands on their arms.

One of the young scamps who followed Bill in

this high emprise was young Will Cody, afterward known as Buffalo Bill. The party returned to St. Joseph with all the horses which had been stolen from the stage company, and with upward of one hundred more belonging to the Indians. Bill had taught the redskins a lesson they never forgot. An end was written to stage-coach massacres.

Next year, 1859, Bill left the employ of the Overland Stage Company, and engaged as driver with the famous freighters, Majors and Russell, for a long and hazardous trip between Independence, Missouri, and Sante Fe, New Mexico. It was at this time that he had his famous fight with a bear, to which so many references have been made by writers of frontier literature.

While passing through the Soccoro range with his team, travelling two miles ahead of his companion, Matt Farley, he encountered a big cinnamon bear in the road. Having two cubs with her, the bear betrayed not the slightest intention of getting out of the way; instead, she showed fight. Bill, provided with his brace of pistols and

a good hunting knife, was not much concerned. Instead of staying on his wagon, which would have been the better part of valour, he sprang to the ground, imagining that it was an easy job to kill a bear.

But not this mother bear. When she had snarlingly approached within a short distance from him, Bill let fly with one of his pistols and caught the cinnamon between the eyes. It appears, as Bill subsequently discovered, that in the case of a bear of her size and family, the spot was ill-chosen. The bullet merely glanced off the skull and resulted only in making the animal more truculent.

She charged.

Bill was too far away from the wagon to gain its security, so nothing was left for him to do but fight. And when man or bear put it up to Wild Bill to have a fight, a good brand of tumult was generally provided.

His next shot injured the animal's left fore leg. The bear reared on her haunches and grappled with her foe. Bill resorted to his knife and

thrust it into the animal's body again and again, and into stomach and throat, but the infuriated beast fought on.

Bill had suffered several frightful lacerations. The ground was wet with blood, and still he was unable to escape the embrace of the infuriated bear. Finally the two antagonists slipped to the ground, Bill underneath with his left arm in the bear's mouth. In this position he found that he could use his knife with greater effectiveness.

In the end, Bill literally disembowelled his antagonist. At the finish it was difficult to say which presented the more horrible spectacle, Bill or the bear. But Bill was alive and the bear dead. That is the way it always happened when Bill got into a fight. But this time he was badly wounded and when Farley drove up he took him to Santa Fe, where he was placed in the care of a capable surgeon. It was several months before he was able to do any active work.

It was two years prior to this time that Bill cut into the trail of Buffalo Bill Cody, and as a result of that meeting they remained fast friends

throughout their lives. Wild Bill was then twenty and Will Cody but eleven years of age. In his various biographies, and in his oft-quoted reminiscences, Buffalo Bill made much of this incident. Having lost his father, young Cody had joined an expedition over the Salt Lake trail, and having been transferred to Lew Simpson's wagon train, he unexpectedly encountered Wild Bill. One day the men were treating the Cody youth rather roughly. Suddenly there came out from under a wagon a young giant.

"What are you fellows trying to do with that boy?" he asked.

One of the men told the interloper to attend to his own business.

"Well, if you fellows really want to fight, tackle me and let that boy alone," Bill replied to this.

The man who came to young Cody's assistance was Wild Bill.

All along in this record, James Butler Hickok has been referred to as Wild Bill. How he gained this sobriquet is in doubt. Lifelong

friends have expressed themselves as being in the dark in the matter. How the mistake was made of substituting William for James is open to conjecture. When Bill Cody first met him on the plains, he tells us, Wild Bill was called Jim Hickok.

In an effort to supply a reason for the nickname, Buffalo Bill said his friend acquired it through a misunderstanding or mistaken identity. He said that young Jim Hickok at the time above referred to had an elder brother named Bill Hickok, who for several years had been a celebrated plainsman, and famed as being one of the best wagon-masters in charge of the great government trains, with all their responsibilities. He became famous for his courage, ability to command men, to defend the interests of his employees, to stand off the Indians and bandits that preyed on the wagon trains, and for his control of the dare-devil spirits who drove the teams. His younger brother, James, according to this account, rose so rapidly that rumour soon identified him with his elder brother, William—

the result being that he was known throughout the West as Wild Bill Hickok.

This is a fairly good story, but the chief fault with it is that Wild Bill had no brother named William. And yet Buffalo Bill's explanation is true in every particular, except as to the name. Mrs. Louis Hickok informs the writer that Wild Bill's brother, Lorenzo, who was a plainsman duplicating Buffalo Bill's description, acquired the nickname Billy Barnes as a child and that name followed him on the plains. Lorenzo then was the original "Wild Bill" Hickok, the sobriquet subsequently acquired by his younger brother James Butler.

With the exception of Buffalo Bill, all other writers—none seemingly aware that Lorenzo Hickok was called Bill on the plains—have claimed that James Butler Hickok was not called Wild Bill until after the famous "subjugation of the McCanles gang," which we shall now consider.

CHAPTER III

THE MAGNUM OPUS OF PISTOLRY

THE inscrutable enigma in Wild Bill's life is the astounding tale in which it has been set forth, time and again, in innumerable publications, that single-handed he snuffed out the lives of the outlaw, David C. McCanles, and nine of his gang.[1] The fact that it endured, unchallenged, for upward of sixty years is in itself an astonishing circumstance. And yet during all those years there were several eye-witnesses of the battle, one of whom is alive to this day, and still the grim, gory, and unplausible story never was denied, nor even the approximate truth revealed.

During the fifteen years that he lived subsequent to the tragedy, Wild Bill never gave what

[1]Fred E. Sutton, writing in the *Saturday Evening Post* as recently as April 10, 1926, repeats this story.

can credibly be accepted as his version of it—neither affirming nor denying such reports as may have come to his attention. Others who had knowledge of the facts only recently have made known their recollections of what happened. A period, then, of more than three-score years has elapsed, during which time border fictioneers have run riot and never halted.

To get at the facts, therefore, meant a careful sifting of the ancient stories, as well as recent verbal and epistolary disclosures. But before presenting the late discoveries pertaining to this classic pistol fight of the last frontier—one man against ten—let us glance at what has been accepted as the actual occurrence:

On the afternoon of July 12, 1861, ten members of the McCanles gang of horse-thieves and outlaws discovered Wild Bill at Rock Springs, Nebraska, and set about to accomplish his destruction. A woman, the wife of a friend, was in the cabin with him. She thrust her husband's loaded rifle into his hands, and he had, besides, his six-shooter and a bowie knife. Bill closed

the door and the outlaws began to batter it down. When the door fell, David C. McCanles burst into the cabin; whereupon Bill shot him through the heart. The death of their leader did not discourage the gang, for the remaining nine rushed to the open door. It was to be a fight to the death. Bill quickly disposed of four of these; the remaining five grappled with him. He was soon badly wounded, but, bowie knife in hand, he slashed and stabbed with all his enormous strength and energy. Up and down the room Bill dragged his murderous assailants, plunging his knife into them at every opportunity. All fell in a heap and when Bill struggled to his feet he discovered that there was not a man left alive to oppose him.

It was not until an article by George Ward Nichols of Boston appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, of February, 1867, that the tale got well under way. Reports of this titanic encounter with ten outlaws, and their summary destruction, spread over the country like the notorious wild fire. Nichols explained that he

visited Springfield, Missouri, several months after the war, and there met Wild Bill and had a long talk with him on the subject of his exploits. That portion of the article which relates to the fight with the "McCanles outlaws" follows:

"I was especially desirous of hearing him relate the history of a sanguinary fight which he had with a party of ruffians in the early part of the war, when, single-handed, he fought and killed ten men. I had heard the story as it came from an officer of the regular army, who, an hour after the affair, saw Bill and the ten dead men—some killed with bullets, others hacked and slashed to death with a knife."

Here it will be seen that Mr. Nichols had the story from an alleged eye-witness of the event, and it would appear to lend extra corroboration to the tale as it came from Bill himself.

"As I write," continued Mr. Nichols, "the details of this terrible tale which I took as the words fell from the scout's own lips, I am conscious of its extreme improbability; but while I listened to the story of the Bible where we are

told that Samson 'with the jawbone of an ass slew a thousand men,' and as I looked upon this magnificent example of human strength and daring, he appeared to me to realize the powers of Samson and Hercules combined, and I should not have been likely to place any limit on his achievements. Besides, one who has lived for four years in the presence of such great heroism and deeds of prowess as were seen during the war, is in what might be called a 'receptive' mood. Be the story true or not, in part, or in whole, I believed then every word Wild Bill uttered, and I believe it to-day."

We now come to Wild Bill's own words, as reported by Mr. Nichols:

"You see this M'Kandlas was the captain of a gang of desperadoes, horse-thieves, murderers, regular cut-throats, who were the terror of everybody on the border, and who kept us in the mountains in hot water whenever they were around. I knew them all in the mountains where they pretended to be trapping, but they were hiding from the hangman. M'Kandlas

was the biggest scoundrel and bully of them all, and was allers a-braggin' of what he could do. One day I beat him shooting at a mark, and threw him at the back-holt. And I didn't drop him as soft as you would a baby, you may be sure. Well, he got savage mad about it and swore he would have his revenge on me some time.

"This was just before the war broke out and we were already taking sides in the mountains either for the South or the Union. M'Kandlas and his gang were border ruffians in the Kansas row, and, of course, they went with the rebs. Bimeby he clar'd out and I shouldn't have thought of the feller ag'in ef he hadn't crossed my path. It 'pears he didn't forget me.

"It was in '61, when I guided a detachment of cavalry who were comin' in from Camp Floyd. We had nearly reached the Kansas line and were in southern Nebraska when one afternoon I went out of camp to go to the cabin of an old friend of mine, a Mrs. Waltman. I took only one of my revolvers with me, for although the war had

broke out I didn't think it necessary to carry both my pistols, and, in an or'nary scrimmage, one is better than a dozen, ef you shoot straight. I saw some wild turkeys on the road as I was goin' down and popped one of 'em over.

"Well, I rode up to Mrs. Waltman's, jumped off my horse, and went into the cabin, which is like most of the cabins on the prarer, with only one room and that had two doors, one opening in front and t'other onto a yard, like.

"'How are you, Mrs. Waltman?' I said, feeling as jolly as you please.

"The minute she saw me she turned as white as a sheet and screamed: 'Is that you, Bill? Oh, my God! They will kill you! Run! run! They will kill you!'

"'Who's a-goin' to kill me?' said I. 'There's two can play at that game.'

"'It's M'Kandlas and his gang. There's ten of them and you have no chance. They've jes gone down the road to the corn-rack. They came up here only five minutes ago. M'Kandlas was draggin' poor Parson Shipley on the ground

with a lariat round his neck. The preacher was 'most dead with choking and the horse stamping on him. M'Kandlas knows yer brings in that party of Yankee cavalry and he swears he'll cut your heart out. Run, Bill, run!—But it's too late; they are coming up the lane.'

"While she was a-talkin' I remembered I had but one revolver, and a load gone out of that. On the table there was a horn of powder and some little bars of lead. I poured the powder into the empty chamber and rammed the lead after it by hammering the barrel on the table, and had just capped the pistol when I heard M'Kandlas shout, 'There's that d—d Yankee Wild Bill's horse; he's here and we'll skin him alive!'"

The scout stopped in his story, Nichols records at this point, rose from his seat, and strode back and forward in a state of great excitement.

"I tell you what it is, Kernal," [Wild Bill is reported to have resumed, after a while] "I don't mind a scrimmage with the fellers round here. Shoot one or two of them and the rest

run away. But all the M'Kandlas gang were reckless, blood-thirsty devils who would fight as long as they had strength to pull a trigger. I have been in tight places, but that's one of the few times when I said my prayers.

"'Surround the house and give him no quarter,' yelled M'Kandlas. When I heard that I felt as quiet and cool as if I was a-goin' to church. I looked around the room and saw a Hawkins rifle hangin' over the bed.

"'Is that loaded?' said I to Mrs. Waltman.

"'Yes,' the poor thing whispered. She was so frightened she couldn't speak out loud.

"'Are you sure?' said I, as I jumped onto the bed and caught it from its hooks. Although my eye did not leave the door, yet I could see she nodded 'yes' again. I put the revolver on the bed, but just then M'Kandlas poked his head inside the doorway, but jumped back when he saw me with the rifle in my hand.

"'Come in here, you cowardly dog,' I shouted. 'Come in here and fight me!'

"M'Kandlas was no coward, even if he was a

bully. He jumped inside the door with his gun level to shoot, but he was not quick enough. My rifle-ball went through his heart. He fell back outside the door, where he was found afterwards holding tight to his rifle which had fallen over his head.

"His disappearance was followed by a yell from his gang and then there was dead silence. I put down the rifle and took the revolver, and I said to myself: 'Only six shots and only nine men to kill. Save your powder, Bill, for the death-hug's a-comin'!' I don't know why it was, Kernal," continued Bill, lookin' at me inquiringly, "but at that moment things seemed clear and sharp. I could think sharp. I could think strong.

"There was a few seconds of that awful stillness and then the ruffians came rushing in at both doors. How they looked with their red, drunken faces and inflamed eyes, shouting and cussin'. But I never aimed more deliberately in my life.

"One—two—three—four; and four men fell dead.

"That didn't stop the rest. Two of them fired their bird-guns at me and then I felt a sting run all over me. The room was full of smoke. Two got in close to me, their eyes glaring out of the clouds. One I knocked down with my fist. 'You are out of my way for a while,' I thought. The second I shot dead. The other three clutched and crowded me on to the bed. I fought hard. I broke with my hand one man's arm. He had his fingers round my throat. Before I could get to my feet I was struck across my breast with the stock of a rifle and I felt the blood rushing out of my nose and mouth. Then I got ugly and I remember that I got hold of a knife, and then it was all cloudy-like and I was wild and I struck savage blows, following the devils up from one side to the other of the room and into the corners striking and slashing until I knew that every one was dead.

"All of a sudden it seemed as if my heart was on fire. I was bleeding everywhere. I rushed out to the well and drank from the bucket and then tumbled down in a faint."

Thus Wild Bill ends the story put in his mouth by Nichols.

Anybody would call it a pretty fine tale; but, examined closely, one would say either that Wild Bill was spoofing the Boston man, or else, which is more likely, the Bostonian had the entire story from the "officer of the regular army," and pinned it on to Bill as a first-hand interview. The "officer of the regular army" turns up later on.

The next most important account of this event appears in J. W. Buel's sketch of Wild Bill in his "Heroes of the Plains," 1881. In his preface he claimed that he had the main facts of his life from Wild Bill himself, and, more curious still, that he gleaned the main points from Bill's diary, which he had borrowed from Bill's wife, when she was residing in Cincinnati with her son-in-law, Gilbert S. Robinson. Mr. Robinson asserts, however, that if Wild Bill had a diary, as described by Mr. Buel, he would have heard of it; but he never did.

Mr. Buel describes Rock Springs as being at

"a point on the Old Platte route fifty miles from Topeka." The Rock Springs in question is one hundred miles distant from Topeka, and was on the Oregon Trail, a few miles from Beatrice, in southeastern Nebraska. Mr. Buel made two mistakes in McCanles's name, since he calls him Bill, while as a matter of fact his name was David C., and his name was not McCandlas, as he spells it, but McCanles. The substance of Mr. Buel's account is as follows:

Wild Bill, following his fight with the bear, became the manager of the Rock Creek Station of the Overland Stage Company. It was a relay post and provided accommodations for twenty-five horses. Bill's chief employment was to guard the stock, owing to the depredations of horse-thieves, numerous in that section. Bill and his assistant, a young Irishman named Doc Mills, occupied a small log hut. McCanles and his followers are depicted as being desperate horse-thieves, highway robbers, and murderers. Mr. Buel also mentions the ill-usage of Parson Shapley, whom Mr. Nichols calls Shipley.

McCanles, according to the Buel story, demanded the horses of Bill for the Confederate service, and it was on account of this that the fight occurred. Doc Mills was away at the time, leaving Bill alone. Bill, in this account, is provided with a Mississippi Yager rifle, two revolvers, and a bowie knife. Bill barricaded the door and McCanles ordered his men to batter it down with a log. The fight which followed in the cabin, accords with Mr. Nichols's account. At the conclusion of the tremendous encounter the McCanles gang had been wiped out root and branch.

Buel, strangely enough, had corroborating evidence, as did Nichols. According to the former, about one hour after the fight the western stage rolled up, containing six passengers among whom "was one Capt. E. W. Kingsbury, who is now [1881] a resident of Kansas City, holding the position of U. S. Chief Storekeeper for the Western District of Missouri. The sight that presented itself to the gaze of the stage passengers, all of whom entered the cabin to view

the havoc which one man had wrought, was most distressing to ordinary sensibilities. Bill was frightfully injured, suffering a fracture of the skull—the frontal bone; three terrible gashes in the breast; his forearm cut through to the bone; four bullets in his body, one in his hip and two in the fleshy part of his right leg; his right cheek cut open and the skin of his forehead cut so deeply that a large portion of the scalp dropped down so far over his eyes as almost to blind him. A surgeon was sent for and a Mrs. Watkins was called in to nurse the wounded hero through his dangerous extremity. By the following June he was able to walk about and he was removed to Denver and in about a year was fully recovered.

"This combat," adds Buel, "of one man fairly whipping ten acknowledged desperadoes, has no parallel, I make bold to say, in any authentic history. The particulars as here recorded are unquestionably correct, for they were obtained from Captain Kingsbury, who heard Bill's first recital of the facts right on the battle ground.

Jolly, the man who died a few days afterward at Manhattan, corroborated the facts and Dr. Joshua Thorne, who attended upon and was one of Bill's confidants, repeated to me the same story as he himself had heard his parents relate it. These direct and most reliable sources, each affirming the same facts, leave no room for doubting the correctness of this account."

We shall see presently, however, that there is considerable room for doubting Captain Kingsbury's story as related by Buel.

Emerson Hough found in Wild Bill a favourite subject; but, judging from what he wrote of him, it is apparent that he got all his data from the *Harper's Magazine* story by Nichols, and from Buel's sketch. He certainly could not have made any personal investigation of the McCanles affair, for he repeated all the old fables of the incident. In Mr. Hough's "The Story of the Outlaw," 1907, he follows the Nichols and Buel yarns of the killing of the "border outlaw Jim McCanles" and nine of his men. Mr. Hough locates the scene of the incident as having been

"at the Rock Creek station, about fifty miles west of Topeka." Rock Creek, Kansas, is a short distance to the east of Topeka, while the fight occurred at Rock Creek, Nebraska, one hundred miles to the northwest of Topeka. Finally, Mr. Hough repeats Captain Kingsbury's gory story of Bill's injuries, saying:

"It took Bill a year to recover from his wounds."

In point of fact, Bill did not receive a scratch in the actual encounter.

What, then, is the conclusion that one must naturally reach? It is the opinion of the writer that while George Ward Nichols saw Wild Bill at Springfield, Missouri, after the war, the alleged conversation had with him as to the McCanles affair, and as published by him in *Harper's*, was a gauzy fabrication. That Captain Kingsbury was the Munchausen of the narrative is self-evident. He invented the story and deceived both Nichols and Buel. Nichols let the cat out of the bag when he stated: "I had heard the story as it came from an officer of the

regular army, who, an hour after that affair, saw Bill and the ten dead men." This officer of the regular army must have been Captain Kingsbury, who is also Buel's authority, for he tells the same story of seeing the ten dead men an hour after the killing.

Let us now have a look at "Beadle's Dime Library," No. 168, of January 11, 1882, the number being devoted to:

"WILD BILL, The Pistol Deadshot:
or, Dagger Don's Double."
By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

In a note, Ingraham states that the *Harper's* story of the McCanles killings was undoubtedly correct for "the particulars were obtained from Captain Kingsbury." Every time you turn around in this story you bump against the Captain. It is remarkable that up to date no one has dragged him into the daylight and introduced him as a fanciful fabricator, the like of which could not be found in a day's hunt. And, furthermore, it appears that he had an able

assistant in a certain Dr. Joshua Thorne, of Kansas City, Missouri. Doctor Thorne, a "great friend of Captain Kingsbury," told Buel that "he removed eleven bullets from the person of Wild Bill, nearly all of which were planted within him at the Rock Creek fight, but during all the painful operation Bill gave expression only to sympathetic words for the ferocious enemies he had slain in that memorable encounter."

As Wild Bill was not fired upon during the fight at Rock Creek, one may naturally suspect that Doctor Thorne was an ally of the Captain in perpetrating this hoax. Even Emerson Hough was deluded, for he stated that when Wild Bill's body was being prepared for burial, it was found to be covered with the scars of many bullet and knife wounds. But Doc Peirce, the amateur undertaker, informs the writer that he did not undress Bill when he prepared him for burial, and so did not see the many scars in question.

CHAPTER IV

THE MCCANLES MYSTERY SOLVED

IN THE foregoing chapter we had to do mostly with myths. We shall now get our feet on the ground and attempt to uncover the actual facts of this famous border battle.

At the outset a little investigation discloses that David C. McCanles, the bad man of the myth, has been fantastically, even preposterously maligned by border historians. He has been depicted by Nichols and Buel as so picturesque and romantic a rogue that it may seem ungracious to strip him of his laurels; but the accusations that he was a common horse-thief, desperado, and murderer seem to have no basis in fact. While David C. McCanles may have been a rather obstreperous person, given to boastfulness, fist fighting, and other boisterous frontier amenities, he was never brought to book, nor

even accused of murder or any other heinous crime.

In a forty-eight-page pamphlet entitled "Early Days in Nebraska"[1] there is a gracefully written chapter by Frank Helvey in which he relates that he became acquainted with Wild Bill at the Rock Creek ranch and that he met him often after the killing of McCanles. He adds that "Wild Bill was a remarkable man, unexcelled as a shot, and hard to get acquainted with." It is evident from this account, let us note in passing, that Helvey did not consider Wild Bill a bad man, nor as one who would shoot down a man without due provocation.

In 1861 Frank Helvey resided at the Little Sandy Ranch, fifteen miles from the Rock Creek Station, and was the nearest neighbour with the exception of the McCanles family. He was one of those who buried the bodies of McCanles, Woods, and Gordon after the fight. Before his death in 1921 he informed Mr. George W. Hansen, a banker of Fairbury, Nebraska (who

[1]Published in 1916 by the Nebraska Society of American Revolution.

has lived all his life in the neighbourhood of Rock Creek and is also intimately conversant with the tragedy), that McCanles cursed his employees a great deal, and was hard on them; but that he was never known to have struck or injured any of them.

In short, the testimony of his closest neighbour is that McCanles was a rough pioneer, arbitrary and argumentative, a loud and voluble talker, often very offensive in his language, and from his conversation liable to be taken for a much worse man than he really was—but no murderer, and not one, ordinarily, to meddle with his neighbour's horse-flesh.

David C. McCanles left the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina in 1859. This was during the excitement of the Colorado gold discoveries. The cry "Pike's Peak or Bust" was heard over the land. He outfitted at Leavenworth, Kansas, and upon reaching Rock Creek met several parties returning from Colorado with the news that the golden bubble had burst. He therefore relinquished the idea of

proceeding farther and purchased the Onley Ranch of a certain Newton Glenn. This property was on the west side of Rock Creek, a few miles distant from the present town of Beatrice.

He at once built a ranch house on the east bank, and later constructed a bridge across the stream. Travellers along the Oregon Trail were charged from ten cents to a dollar and a half each for crossing, and, emigrant travel being heavy, McCanles enjoyed a handsome revenue from the tolls. In the conduct of this business he is said to have employed as many as twenty men, and tradition has it that he was prosperous enough to bury ten thousand dollars in gold in an iron kettle somewhere on the ranch. For months after his death there was much industrious digging, but the cache, if it really existed, never was found.

Soon after he settled, however, he sent for his brother, J. L. McCanles, and his family, as well as for his own wife and children, and for their occupancy built another house on the east

side of the creek. On September 20, 1859, his brother's family, his wife and two children, as well as James Woods, a nephew, and an orphan boy named Billy Woods, arrived at Rock Creek. The following year his brother moved to a ranch on the Little Blue River, a short distance away, and McCanles then sold the house and bridge to Russell, Majors, and Waddell, owners of the Overland Mail and Pony Express Company. They sent a man named Horace Wellman there to manage the station and to take charge of the horses kept there for the use of stagecoaches and express riders. Wild Bill Hickok was assigned as stock tender. Within a year J. L. McCanles moved to Johnson County, Nebraska; the so-called West Ranch was sold, and McCanles himself occupied the ranch on the creek, where he devoted his time to growing hay and other farm products.

Now, Wellman and McCanles quarrelled. Tradition has it that payments on the station were long overdue and that McCanles blamed

Wellman for this conditions of affairs. It is more probable that the quarrel was due indirectly to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Mr. Hansen informs the writer that all David McCanles's sympathies were with the South,[1] and that he expressed himself on the subject of secession in most violent language. Mr. Hansen was told by some of the older men of that time that McCanles wanted to organize a company of men and carry on guerrilla warfare for the South. We may naturally conclude that a man of McCanles's ardent nature would set about to gather horses to carry out this project. Guerrilla warfare and horse-lifting went hand in hand—and in charge of Wellman and Wild Bill were a considerable number of excellent horses owned by the stage line and the pony express, for the safety of which Wild Bill was directly accountable.

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[1]Monroe McCanles, his son, asserts that his father was neither a secessionist nor a Confederate sympathizer. He says all his family were on the Union side; that some of his near relatives were killed in east Tennessee because they were Union sympathizers. It would appear, however, that he is somewhat misinformed as to his father's war activities.

Wild Bill was intensely loyal to the Union cause, and would have resisted to the death any attempt to take horses for use by Confederate cavalry, but his quarrel with McCanles was personal as well as political. For sixty years this motive for the shooting has been concealed. The first hint at this important factor in the truth, and the first effort to dispel the old gory tale related by Nichols, Buel, and others, is found in a little book by Charles Dawson entitled "Pioneer Tales of the Oregon Trail and Jefferson County, Nebraska," published in 1912. It is evident that numerous writers, including Emerson Hough, had never heard of it, nor were any of these writers aware that Monroe McCanles, an eye-witness of the shooting, was still alive. Mr. Dawson's book had merely a local circulation in Nebraska. It was not reviewed by the metropolitan press. There is no copy of it at the Public Library in New York, although there is one on the shelves in the Congressional Library at Washington.

Mr. Dawson, whose family is the present

owner of the ranch on which the Rock Creek station was located, must have been acquainted with certain important facts. He states that because of the troubles between the North and the South, David C. McCanles was anxious to sell his property and return to his home state. Dawson then advances several reasons for the feud between McCanles and Wild Bill, but he never mentions the stage company's horses as the genesis of the trouble.

He asserts that "Wild Bill had a weakness for gambling, and it is alleged that he created suspicions in the minds of his fellow gamblers by his method of winning."

This aspersion on Hickok's character should be met at once. Everyone who knew Bill vouches for his sterling honesty. He was a thoroughly reliable man. Fred E. Sutton, of Kansas City, who knew Bill during the latter years of his life, replied when asked for his opinion of Dawson's statement:

"Wild Bill Hickok was the last man in the

world who would do a crooked act, or cheat at cards."

The same question was put to Edward T. Colburn, of Salt Lake City, who knew Bill intimately.

"I don't think Wild Bill ever did a crooked thing at gambling or anything else," he answered.

Such unanimous testimony makes it appear that Dawson was almost certainly wrong in ascribing the quarrel to a gambling dispute. There was another and far more powerful motive, which Dawson was the first to point out. McCanles and Wild Bill were infatuated with the same woman. This opinion is stated circumspectly, and must be studied with such care that we quote the paragraph verbatim:

"Back in the sunny hills of North Carolina," Dawson writes, "there lived a lass beautiful in face and form, ideal, and embodying all that makes man chivalrous and death-defying. Kate Shell, as she was commonly called, journeyed from her home in the pine-clad mountains

to the desert wilds of Nebraska during the summer of 1860. The motive that impelled her to reside at Rock Creek Station was concealed in the hearts of the few. At last her charms (as Dame Gossip says) were reserved to this circle, and that fact caused domestic troubles."

According to Mr. Dawson, Wild Bill fell in love with the girl, and his attentions to her were resented by David McCanles to such a pitch that he ordered Bill "on the penalty of violence or death not to cross the creek where she lived." Two motives are therefore advanced by Dawson for the ill-feeling between Wild Bill and McCanles, namely, that Bill had cheated at cards, and that he was courting McCanles's light o' love. We are then informed that after the tragedy "Kate Shell was put aboard a westbound stage early the next morning and subsequently became a noted character of the early Black Hills history."

This statement, so far as the Black Hills are concerned, is without foundation in fact. It became the business of the writer to find Kate

Shell and to get her version of this celebrated case. How she was found, and by what means, cannot be told without violating confidences.

Kate Shell's maiden name was Sarah Shull. The spelling "Shell" may have been phonetic or erroneously made by someone in after years. She is, at this writing, ninety-three years old. She did leave the Rock Creek Station the day after the tragedy, and that she has managed to keep her identity and whereabouts a secret for more than sixty years is indeed remarkable.

Having been located, she consented only with great reluctance to discuss the tragedy. Even after a lapse of more than half a century the incident is an exceedingly painful remembrance to her. Inducing her to talk was much like opening an oyster with a blade of grass. It was a task of months to obtain anything significant from her. Here follow the answers to such questions as Sarah Shull was willing to give:

"Was money owed by Wellman the cause of the tragedy?"

"No."

"Were you in the cabin when McCanles was shot?"

"No. I was at my home two miles away."

"In your opinion, and from what you were told at the time, did Wild Bill kill McCanles in self-defence?"

"Certainly—yes."

"What makes you think this is true?"

"Because on the morning of the tragedy I heard McCanles say that he was going to clean up on the people at the Station."

"You say McCanles stole horses?"

"Yes, he stole horses."

"Were those horses for the use of the Confederate cavalry?"

"Yes."

After she was sent away from Rock Creek Station Sarah Shull made her way to Missouri, and thence to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where she lived for several years. It was during her residence in the latter city that she had her photograph taken, which is reproduced in this book. She subsequently lived in Denver and

Salt Lake City. Some years after the Rock Creek tragedy she married a man named De Valed, and in 1890 they were operating an orange grove in Polaska, Florida. Five years later they moved to Johnson County, Tennessee. The couple were subsequently divorced, when Mrs. De Valed transferred her belongings to her present abode—the exact location of which cannot, at her request, be revealed.

A man who met her several years ago describes her as "a neat, gray-haired little woman slightly stoop-shouldered, with bright blue eyes. She is quick-spoken, and with a mind of her own."

The foregoing testimony has been given at length because it establishes the motives for the most renowned duel in border annals—motives which previous accounts have stated partially, erroneously, or altogether neglected. That David C. McCanles's ardent Southern sympathies led him to appropriate horses for the Confederate cavalry seems irrefutable. It appears that he went to the Rock Creek Station of the Overland Mail and Pony Express Company to

get either Wild Bill's horse or the company's stock, that he had previously threatened Wild Bill with personal violence for his attentions to Sarah Shull, and that his choleric temper made him a man apt to execute such threats. We come now to the events of July 12, 1861.

During the first days of July, Wellman left the Station. Tradition has it that he went to Nebraska City in the attempt to secure funds to pay McCanles for the property, but this is refuted by the testimony of the only living eye-witness of the shooting: Monroe McCanles, then a boy of twelve. He has kept his peace about the tragedy for more than sixty years, and the writer had difficulty in inducing him to discuss the affair, but at last he recounted the history of that fatal day as follows:

Wellman went, not to Nebraska City, but to Brownsville, and solely to get some supplies. Monroe McCanles accompanied him on this journey. They returned on the afternoon of July 12th, and soon after their arrival young McCanles met his father near the Station.

With him were James Woods and James Gordon. These two walked toward the barn in which the horses were kept, while David McCanles and his son walked toward the house, in which were Wild Bill, Mr. and Mrs. Wellman, and Sarah Kelsey, a servant.

According to Monroe McCanles, while Wellman was away at Brownsville Mrs. Wellman and his father had had a quarrel; but just what it was about no one ever knew. In his opinion this difficulty had more to do with the tragedy than anything else.

David C. McCanles, accompanied by his son Monroe, walked to the kitchen door and asked for Wellman. It is Monroe McCanles's recollection that Mrs. Wellman came to the door, and that his father asked if Wellman were in the house. Mrs. Wellman replied that he was, and McCanles asked that he come out. Mrs. Wellman then demanded to know what he wanted of her husband.

"I want to settle with him," McCanles replied to this.

Mrs. Wellman stated that her husband would not come out.

"Send him out or I'll come in and drag him out!" McCanles retorted.

Wild Bill now stepped to the door. McCanles looked him in the face and remarked, "Jim, we have been friends all the time, haven't we?"

"Yes," answered Wild Bill.

"Are we friends now?" McCanles went on.

"Yes," answered Wild Bill.

"Will you hand me a drink?"

Wild Bill turned and a moment later appeared with a dipper of water. McCanles drank, and as he handed the dipper back he started, having apparently seen something that threatened danger. An instant later the report of Wild Bill's rifle sounded and McCanles fell dead. Woods and Gordon ran up, and were also shot to death.

This version of the tragedy, as given by Monroe McCanles, the only living eye-witness, provides no reasonable motive for the killing of McCanles, or of Woods and Gordon. It is inexplicable that either Mr. or Mrs. Wellman or

Wild Bill should, after McCanles was shot, suddenly develop a frenzied desire to kill Woods and Gordon, with whom they had no apparent quarrel.

Monroe McCanles states that a week later there was a preliminary hearing at which all were acquitted. Asked for a statement of what happened at the trial, he replied:

"Jim Hickok, Horace Wellman, and Dock Brink made their defence before Justice Albert Towle that McCanles and his gang had come to take the stage stock, and that the battle was over the horses. They had the preponderance of evidence. I was the only witness, but was not called to testify."

Here is a strange state of affairs! Three men, new to the district, set upon David McCanles and his two companions, and kill them. They are brought to trial before Justice Towle, who was David McCanles's neighbour. They swear that McCanles had come to the Overland Mail Station and demanded the horses for the Confederate cavalry, and that they had killed

McCanles and his two men in self-defence. Now, David McCanles must have revealed his Southern sympathies vividly to his neighbours to have such a story believed by Justice Towle.

Another curious thing is that Monroe McCanles, who was standing at the side of his father when he was shot by Wild Bill, was not called as a witness. J. L. McCanles was present with his nephew. He was a very able man—later a state senator of Colorado—but hearing the defence he seems to have let the case go by default. Until Mr. Monroe McCanles is willing to explain these matters the enigma can never be wholly solved. George V. Ayres, residing at Deadwood, South Dakota, is Justice Albert Towle's son-in-law. Mr. Ayres spent his boyhood days in Nebraska near the Rock Creek Station, and he informs the writer that Wild Bill was "bound over to the Circuit court; but that was the last record made in the case. Public sentiment was so strong in approval of Hickok's act that the case was dropped."

It is certain, however, that instead of ten

desperate ruffians being wiped out by Wild Bill in a furious hand-to-hand encounter, only three men were killed, and not one of the McCanles faction fired a shot!

On the other hand, the testimony of Sarah Shull, and the fact that the McCanles family did not press the case before Judge Towle, make it probable that Bill did not commit cold-blooded murder, but shot in self-defence. That he assured McCanles he was his friend and gave him a drink of water is not relevant. Such a thing might have been done when both men were about to reach for weapons, while each was measuring the other before an impending clash. All his life Wild Bill shot first—but never did he pull trigger until his adversary had made a hostile move.

McCanles came to the cabin door to settle a quarrel and take horses by force. A fight resulted and he and his two companions were left dead on the field. McCanles had not taken into account that the brown-haired, unknown young stock-tender might be a bad man to fool with.

CHAPTER V

WARTIME ADVENTURES

WILD BILL was next heard of at Fort Leavenworth, where he was engaged as Brigade Wagon-master under General John C. Fremont. This was not his first experience with military forces, for it has been pointed out that he served with Jim Lane's Red Legs for a considerable time during the previous year.

In all his service during the Civil War Wild Bill was never a regular, but acted for the most part as a sharpshooter, scout, and spy. One would have to search far and wide to duplicate his madcap adventures. His service is crowded with amazing and astonishing performances. Whether these exploits are authentic or the invention of Buel, whose "Heroes of the Plains" provides the only available history of this period of Wild Bill's life, can neither be proven nor

disproven. Some make so bold as to suspect Buel of being a fictioneer—but to my mind the fables are too good to be untrue, and they are thoroughly in keeping with the reckless daring and élan which were Wild Bill's characteristics.

Under the perilous conditions that existed on the Missouri and Kansas border at the time, men of Wild Bill's courage were in constant demand. To keep the highways open and troops free from molestation by bushwhackers was a source of considerable worry to the military authorities. Bill's first duty was to conduct a division train from Fort Leavenworth to Sedalia. On the third day after his departure, when within a few miles of the Missouri line, the wagon train was attacked by a company of Confederates under Captain Blunt.

Owing to the cowardice of the men under Wild Bill the outfit was captured without a struggle. All were made prisoners with the exception of Bill himself—who not only refused to surrender, but opened fire on the enemy. He immediately turned his horse in the direction of Kansas City

and was followed by at least fifty of the enemy. Bill finally evaded his pursuers, but not until he had killed four of them. Arriving at Kansas City he reported the capture of the train to Colonel Jennison.

Bill was immediately supplied with a number of soldiers, and by fast riding they came upon the Confederates within a few miles of the place where the attack had been made on the train. He at once ordered a charge. The fight was short and decisive. The Confederates, being taken by surprise, speedily scattered and thus allowed their new acquisitions to fall into the hands of Bill and his followers.

Bill was considerably elated over the result of this exploit, and conducted the train into Sedalia in triumph. Almost immediately afterward he offered his services to General Samuel R. Curtis, then acting under orders of General Hallack. General Curtis appointed him to a post similar to that which he had filled under General Fremont.

As wagon-master in General Curtis's army, which was operating against the Confederate

forces under Generals Van Dorn, Price, and McCulloch, he participated in the battle of Pea Ridge, which was fought on March 6–8, 1862. In this engagement Bill acted as a sharpshooter. He was able to obtain a commanding position on a hill overlooking Cross-Timber Hollow and lay concealed behind a log for nearly four hours, during which time it is stated that by actual count he killed thirty-five of the enemy. General McCulloch has been counted as being among his victims. The attention of the Confederate army was drawn to him and an effort was made to dislodge and kill him. A company was sent to rout him out, and he certainly would have been annihilated had it not been for the timely arrival of one hundred comrades who, recognizing his danger, charged to his rescue. The opposing forces waged a hot fight, but Bill escaped.

General Curtis, discovering in Bill certain high qualifications, engaged him as a spy with instructions to enter General Price's lines and ferret out the plans of the Confederate general,

who had laid waste a large part of western Missouri with the result that the Federal Government was seriously concerned. General Curtis had been sent to drive the Confederates from the state.

Bill was provided with a fine horse and directed to use his own devices in entering the Confederate lines. Assuming the name of Bill Barnes, the nickname of his brother Lorenzo, he made a wide circuit through Kansas and Indian Territory, and entering Arkansas, made directly for Little Rock. At this point he was able to enlist in a Confederate company of mounted rangers which had been organized under General Price's command to operate in southwest Missouri.

Toward the end of September this company joined General Price, who a few days later formed a junction with General Joe Shelby. A stand was made on Elk River to await the coming of General Curtis.

Bill had by this time met with high favour in the Confederate ranks, with the result that he

was appointed an orderly by General Price. On October 25, 1862, General Price began his attack, General Shelby being on the extreme left. While the armies were facing each other separated by only a narrow creek, General Price placed despatches in Bill's hands with orders to deliver them to General Shelby with all speed. Bill's predicament was now extreme and he felt he should make his utmost effort to communicate immediately with General Curtis. He realized that he must, at great risk, gain the Union line. He adopted an amazing strategy.

Among his company was a desperado named Jake Lawson. He was an all-round bad man, a boastful and dangerous cutthroat. Bill rode toward the left of the line and out of the sight of Price, then halted before his company and called for Lawson, whom he addressed in a loud voice.

"See here, Jake, let's have a little fun. These fellows have never been under fire, so suppose we give them a sample of our pluck so as to encourage them for to-morrow."

"Well," responded Lawson, "what do you want to do? Do you want to fight me with pistols at three paces, or do you prefer the bowie with the two ends of a handkerchief held in our teeth over the back of a chair?"

"Oh, no," said Bill, "nothing so desperate as that, but I'll make you take water on a less dangerous experiment. I'll wager my horse against yours that I can ride closer to the enemy's lines than you can."

This seemed too much of a good thing for Lawson. He turned and walked toward his tent. The laugh of those about him brought him to a halt at the entrance.

"What's the matter with your nerve?" asked Bill. "You ain't afraid, are you, Jake?"

"No, I ain't afeared," responded Lawson, "but what's the use of trying such infernal nonsense?"

"None at all," replied Bill, "if you haven't got the sand to accept the challenge. I only want to see the real colour of your character."

The soldiers standing about began to laugh

heartily at this and several were bold enough to tell Jake that he was a bogus desperado. Being taunted in this wise, Jake at length accepted Bill's challenge. The two now mounted and rode away, followed by the curious glances of the company. Within a few minutes they were in view of the Union forces.

Bill yelled to Lawson to follow and, putting the spurs to his horse, dashed toward the creek. At this juncture the Union pickets began to fire at the riders coming toward them, thus bringing the exploit to the attention of both armies.

"Hold your fire!" Bill cried out upon reaching the bank of the stream. "Can't you see that I'm trying to get into your lines?"

This served to acquaint Lawson with the real condition of affairs and that he had been led into a trap. He drew his pistol, but Bill instantly sent a ball crashing into his brain. Before Bill had reached the opposite bank the Confederates showered bullets on him; but he passed through the leaden hail without injury. When he reached the bank, he was wildly cheered by

General Curtis's men, then conducted to the General's headquarters, where he handed over the despatches entrusted to him by General Price for transmission to General Shelby. Knowing by this time that General Curtis was advised of their plans, the Confederates broke camp that night and made for Arkansas.

After an interval of a few days, Bill again was asked to enter the ranks of the enemy. Well disguised, and accompanied by an old friend, Natt Tuckett, he set out in the direction of the Indian Territory. His purpose was to go to central Texas, and on their arrival Bill and Tuckett joined the Confederate forces under General Kirby Smith. The latter general now moved his force into Arkansas. General Smith encountered General Curtis at Lewisburg, the latter having a force of five thousand men and two pieces of light ordnance. Except for the field guns, the forces were equally matched, and the battle began.

Two horsemen were suddenly discovered making a bold dash for the Federal lines. There

was a rapid discharge of musketry and a dozen Confederate cavalrymen were sent in pursuit. Unhappily, Bill's companion was killed, but Bill kept on and rode into the Federal lines. It has been said that tears were seen coursing down his sunburned cheeks, so overcome was he through the loss of his friend Tuckett.

With the completion of this exploit, and having supplied General Curtis with important information, he requested a leave of absence, which was readily granted. He returned to Leavenworth, Kansas, where he again met his friend, Will Cody, afterward known as Buffalo Bill. After a short rest, Bill accepted an engagement to take a government train to Rolla, Missouri, and took his young friend Cody with him. Having arrived at their destination, the two companions went on to St. Louis.

A race meeting was advertised to take place in September, and having brought along with him a running horse that he had used in scouting service, Bill proposed to enter his mount. The two friends had $750, and so sure were they that

their horse could beat anything in sight that they bet it all. This horse was called Old Mountain. Cody was to ride the race, the opponent being a little black mare from Peoria, Illinois, ridden by a Negro boy. At the start the little black mare sped away and left her opponent in a cloud of dust. Old Mountain proved a dismal fiasco. The two adventurers were left without a penny.

The only way out of the difficulty was for Bill to go to the military authorities and engage as a scout. Cody returned to Leavenworth while Bill started for Springfield, from which point he headed for General Curtis's army.

The new enterprise set for him was to learn the designs of Generals Van Dorn and Price, who were expected to make another invasion of Missouri. At this period, the Quantrell guerrillas, of which the James boys were members, were laying waste the western counties of Missouri. Bill's scheme to gain the information desired was to encircle the enemy. He consequently rode directly across the country until he

struck the old Santa Fe trail. He followed this trail for several days into the western part of Kansas. Then heading south he passed through the Indian Territory, and entered Texas.

He then rode eastward and stopped at Texarkana, representing himself as a cattleman. Riding farther eastward, he finally came upon a dilapidated log cabin inhabited by an old Negro and his wife. After some little talk with the couple he decided that they could be relied upon to keep a secret. From them he learned the location of the Confederate forces. Going to the stable in the morning, Bill discovered a woebegone jackass, the property of the Negro. He now designed to change his disguise and, by the use of the jackass, make his way into the Confederate lines. Then followed this conversation between Bill and the old Negro.

"I see, uncle, you have a jackass in the stable. Does he belong to you?"

"Yes, sah," responded the old man. "I'se had dat dere animule fo' de last ten yeahs; but he's gittin' a good deal like his marster now—not

much 'count, sah; but I reckon ef he hadn't been so used up, de Confeds would 'a' had 'im afore dis."

"Yes," said Bill, "I guess that is so; he doesn't look like a very valuable brute, but at the same time he is such a curious-looking specimen that I've got an idea he would suit me for a purpose I now have in view. How would you like to trade your jack for my horse?"

"Well, now, dat is a funny propersishun fo' you to make, 'case I hain't got nuffin' to give you to boot."

"But I don't want any boot; you bring out the jack and let my horse stay in the stable, if that kind of a trade will suit you."

"Yah, yah, yah; why, marster, you doan mean dat, does you? Afore God, dat would be de mos' curiousest bargain I'se hearn on; why, I declaar ef the Confeds would see dat hoss in my stable dey'd want to know how I got 'im right away, and I guess dey would take me, too, in order to settle de title."

"I'll tell you how to do; if anybody wants to

know anything about that horse, you tell them that he is a stray that you have taken up, and that you're expecting the owner along every day."

"Now, if you is a foolin' me, go away, but ef you is in yarnest, why, dar is de jack and I'll try and keep de hoss."

"Well, I'll just charge you one thing to boot, and that is if you have an old suit of clothes about the house that you don't care to use much longer, I will take them. Will you agree to that?"

"Yes, sah, I'll call de ole woman and see what she's got tucked away in de loft. Nancy! oh, Nancy!" yelled the old darkey.

The old woman left her corn cake on the clapboard before the fire, and thrusting her bandanna-covered head through the door, responded: "What does you want, Silas?"

"Why, I wants you to look on de peg by de chimbley and get me dat dar last Sunday-suit of jeans and bring it hyar."

The clothes were brought and proved to be a

sorry costume; just the sort of disguise that Bill wanted. Having dressed himself up in them, and donning a large hat of unbleached straw, he mounted the patient jackass and was ready for the campaign. As his beard had now grown long, he felt certain that he would not be recognized by his best friend. He travelled onward until he reached Pine Bluff, where General Van Dorn's army was stationed. He rode his jackass straight up to headquarters and offered his services as a private of the Confederate army. The recruiting sergeant had a good laugh over Bill's grotesque appearance.

"Well, sir," said the sergeant, "where the devil did you come from?"

"Oh," responded Bill, "I got a little cabin up here in the Ozarks where I've been livin' in a patch o' clearin' with this here jack and Bowlegs for the last twenty year."

"Who is Bowlegs?" asked the sergeant.

"Why, look-ahere, Mister," replied Bill, "haven't you never heard o' Bowlegs, the greatest wildcat and b'ar killer in the whole

o' Arkansaw? Bowlegs is my dog, and ef you'd a seed him two months ago tackle a catamount upon Huckleberry Hill, bigger'n my jack, you'd 'a' bet the last bristle on yer back that he could whip anything that ever wore hair or straddled the Devil's Backbone.[1] You see, the neighbourhood had been a-losin' o' pigs an' calves for a long time, though pigs an' calves is a scarce article up on the hill, an——"

"Well, never mind the dog," growled the officer. "We haven't time now to hear your account of Bowlegs; we'll take for granted that he is the best fighter on the Devil's Backbone, but we want men now that can fight just like your dog. Do you harbour the suspicion that you can do as good fighting as Bowlegs, especially if we should set you on a drove of Yankees?"

"I think I might make a full hand ef you'll fernish me with the amernition. I got plenty caps jest now, but my powder an' shot is kinder run low," replied Bill.

[1]The Ozark range of mountains.

This remark of Bill's created hearty laughter all around.

"You don't suppose our soldiers fight with shotguns and such weapons as you have in your hand, do you?" the sergeant asked.

"Of course I do, 'case hain't shotguns better'n squirrel rifles by a durn'd sight?" Bill replied.

After this conversation Bill was duly enlisted. He spent some weeks in camp with his division before it was ordered to Pine Bluff. He was a private in Company "A" under Captain Leverson. Meanwhile General Curtis was moving in that direction. Leverson's company was finally joined by reinforcements which had been fighting under General Price.

It was now that a corporal who was a witness to the ride of Wild Bill and Nat Tuckett recognized Wild Bill, whose name, it appears, was on the lips of every Confederate in Arkansas. Immediately Bill found himself under arrest. He was placed on trial, and his conviction followed within an hour. He was sentenced to be shot the next morning.

Buel, who said he had Wild Bill's memorandum concerning this event, quotes from it as follows:

"The Rebs convicted me on mighty little evidence and here I am now in a bad pickle; it may be that they will shoot me to-morrow, but somehow I feel that some means of escape will offer. Curtis must be very near, for he has been reported in camp as coming like the devil beating tan bark, on a straight trail for the Bluffs. Something tells me that I will get out of this and this feeling gives me nerve. I'll keep a lookout and see what's what."

This seems rather anomalous, since it was doubtful that Bill would have been allowed to retain his notebooks and make these observations during his incarceration. These lines may have been written afterward to indicate his feelings during the time.

Having been convicted, Bill was now imprisoned in a log hut, his arms pinioned, and a guard of several men set over him. It appears that a great storm of wind and rain set up about

midnight and raged with violence until morning. The guards, tired out after a hard day's march, finally dropped off to sleep one after another.

About three o'clock in the morning Bill perceived the handle of an old case knife hidden in an auger-hole. He finally was able to secure the knife. With difficulty he pushed the handle of the weapon into the auger-hole, leaving the blade protruding outward. With even more difficulty he was able at last to cut the cord binding his wrists. He was now a free man. Securing the knife he killed the sentinel that guarded the hut and stripped him of his clothes. Aided by the darkness and carrying the guard's musket he made his escape, reaching General Curtis's army on the following morning.

This escapade served enormously to enhance his reputation among the soldiers, who looked upon him as one possessing a charmed life. He was able to impart much valuable information to General Curtis, which resulted in particular advantage to the Union forces.

Among the Wild Bill legends there is a story

of his killing two desperadoes at North Platte, Nebraska, while on a scout at this period. That Bill was not killed was wholly due to his expertness in shooting with both hands simultaneously. It is true that no matter how he shot—whether he aimed by the eye, or blazed away from the hip—there is no case in the record where he missed his man.

At North Platte, according to the legend, he walked into a restaurant. Two desperadoes noticed him and decided to make a name for themselves by killing him. The plan formed was for one man to enter the restaurant from the front door and the other from the rear, and so catch him unawares. Fortunately, the young waitress who had just served Bill overheard this conversation. She informed Bill at once of what she had heard.

"Thanks, little girl. Please get to one side at once," said Bill.

The man who entered the front door was in the act of raising his weapon when Bill dropped him with his left-hand revolver, and throwing

the gun in his right hand over his shoulder caught the man coming from the rear. Both shots were mortal—an unexampled piece of gunnery.

As Wild Bill was now as well known in the Confederate army as in the Union forces, he refused to enter again the enemy's lines. Wearing the uniform of a Confederate officer, in order to secure information from Southern sympathizers, he devoted himself to scouting. General Price's second invasion of Missouri followed, and General Daviess was sent to harass his rear until such time as General Curtis could prepare for a second campaign. General Daviess's headquarters were at Rolla, and Wild Bill, who was familiar with the district, joined the Union forces at that point as a scout. It was not long before Wild Bill engaged in an enterprise on his own account.

On July 25, 1864, he mounted his horse and, without informing any one of his purpose, set off to make a private investigation of conditions in the southern part of Phelps County. He rode for a considerable distance without discovering

any Confederates. However, upon arriving near Lake Spring, he was suddenly accosted by three men, well armed, on horseback. Bill was commanded to dismount, and was informed that if he did not do so, he would be shot.

Bill was never worried by the odds against him in any encounter. With incredible speed he drew his revolvers and shot his three adversaries. Bill at once captured the three horses, one being a beautiful black mare which he named Black Nell, and which became one of his most prized possessions and famous along the border because of her marvellous accomplishments. Returning to headquarters General Daviess, observing that he had three extra horses, surmised that Bill had been making reprisals upon non-belligerents.

"You have been out of camp four days without leave," the general snapped. "Where have you been operating and where did you get these horses?"

Resenting the general's tone and manner, Bill replied gruffly:

"I am not a private soldier, and as a scout I go as I please. The horses have been turned over to you, therefore I must say that it is none of your business where I got them."

This insolent language enraged General Daviess, who ordered Bill to be confined in the guard house. During the same evening the general was riding about the post when, to his astonishment, he discovered Bill saluting him from the sidewalk! Infuriated, the general rushed to the guard house and demanded to know why Wild Bill had been permitted to escape. The general was assured that Bill was still confined.

However, this was soon discovered to be an error. Investigation proved that Bill had been confined with a prisoner whose term of service had expired that evening. The two had swapped clothes and the prisoner remained in the guard house while Bill went out to take an airing. General Daviess was so pleased with this stratagem that he ordered both men sent to headquarters. Greatly to Bill's surprise, the general

greeted him cordially and invited him to have a drink. The general, thereupon, spoke ardently of the value of true friendship. He complimented the soldier whose goodness of heart had prompted him to sacrifice his own in order to secure the liberty of his friend.

The general then turned to Bill and asked him how it was that he had gained possession of the horses. Bill apologized for the gruff language that had occasioned his arrest, and related the circumstances of his private expedition. To verify this story he asked that General Daviess send a few men with him to the spot where the fight took place. On the following day a detail went with Bill to the scene of battle and buried the three bushwhackers. Bill now became one of General Daviess's most ardent friends.

A famous fighting man like Wild Bill who was not provided with a horse of super-equine capacities would be an anomaly not to be endured. All great generals, from Napoleon to Grant, even the movie heroes who enact stirring stories of

the Wild West of Hollywood, have their prancing steeds of blazing renown. That Wild Bill was so provided will be no surprise to the reader.

The first view that George Ward Nichols had of Black Nell was at Springfield, Missouri. One day a murmur drew his attention to the outside of the house, when he discerned Wild Bill riding up the street at a gallop. Arriving opposite the hotel he swung his right arm around with a circular motion. Black Nell, according to Nichols, instantly stopped and dropped to the ground as if a cannonball had knocked the life out of her! Bill left her there, stretched upon the ground, and joined the group of observers on the porch.

"Black Nell hasn't forgot her old tricks," said one of them.

"No," answered the scout. "God bless her! She is wiser and truer than most men I know. That mare will do anything for me. Won't you, Nelly?"

"The mare winked affirmatively the only eye we could see!" related Nichols.

"Wise!" continued her master. "Why, she knows more than a judge. I'll bet the drinks for the party that she'll walk up these steps and into the room and climb up on the billiard table and lie down."

The bet was taken at once, not because any one doubted the capabilities of the mare, but because the exploit promised excitement and novelty for which all yearned.

"Bill whistled in a low tone," writes Nichols. "Nell instantly scrambled to her feet, walked toward him, put her nose affectionately under his arm, followed him into the room, and to my extreme wonderment climbed upon the billiard table, which groaned under the weight of the four-legged animal and several men whom Nell permitted to sit upon her. When she got down from the table, which was as graceful a performance as might be expected under the circumstances, Bill sprang upon her back, dashed through the high, wide doorway and at a single bound cleared the flight of steps and landed in the middle of the street.

The scout then dismounted, snapped his riding whip, and the noble beast bounded off down the street, rearing and plunging to her own intense satisfaction. A kindly disposed individual who must have been a stranger, supposing the mare was running away, tried to catch her, whereupon she stopped, and as if resenting his impertinence, let fly her heels at him and then quietly trotted to her stable.

"'Black Nell has carried me along through many a tight place,' said the scout, as we walked toward my quarters. 'She trains easier than any animal I ever saw. That trick of dropping quick which you saw has saved my life time and again. When I have been out scouting on the prarer or in the woods, I have come across parties of rebels and have dropped out of sight in the tall grass before they saw us.

"'One day a gang of rebs who had been hunting for me and thought they had my track, halted for half an hour within fifty yards of us. Nell laid as close as a rabbit and didn't even whisk her tail to keep the flies off, until the rebs

moved off, supposing they were on the wrong scent. The mare will come at my whistle and foller me about just like a dog. She won't mind any one else nor allow them to mount her, and will kick a harness and wagon all ter pieces ef you try to hitch her in one. And she's right, Kernel,' added Bill, with the enthusiasm of a true lover of a horse sparkling in his eyes. 'A hoss is too noble a beast to be degraded by such toggery. Harness mules and oxen, but give a hoss a chance ter run.'"

Here, again, we have in Nichols's account the Bostonian attempting the dialect of a rural Westerner. As already remarked, Wild Bill's accent, according to his old friends, was not that of a mudsock Missourian. Nevertheless, we have ample verification of the presence of Black Nell in Springfield and her extraordinary accomplishments.

In the "History of Greene County, Missouri," 1883, we read:

"After settling in Springfield, a favourite diversion of his [Wild Bill's] was to ride his horse

[presumably Black Nell] on sidewalks and into saloons, hotels, stores, and do other tricks to the infinite delight, no doubt, of the proprietors, none of whom, unfortunately, had the grit to blow the bully's head off."

This was written nearly twenty years after the events disclosed, and by an anonymous writer who was evidently not acquainted with the character of the man written about. Wild Bill Hickok was never a bully, and that he was a law-abiding citizen at all times is the testimony of all who knew him.

Black Nell, said at the time to be "famous among the most celebrated horses of America," died at Kansas City in 1869. The passing of his equine friend caused Wild Bill great grief. He buried her on the countryside and frequently made pilgrimages to her grave.

CHAPTER VI

FIGHT WITH CONQUERING BEAR AND A NEW INDIAN ROMANCE

WE HAVE already seen that Bill, according to reliable information, had during his residence in Missouri been affianced, Indian fashion, to a Shawnee belle. We now come to a new Indian romance which is interwoven with his sanguinary duel with Conquering Bear.

During January and February, 1865, Wild Bill had been employed as Chief of Scouts under General Curtis. In February, Conquering Bear, one of the sub chiefs of the Sioux Indians, a friendly tribe under the command of Jim Lane, arrived at Fort Leavenworth and reported that five hundred Choctaw warriors were encamped at Lawrence, Kansas, on the Kaw River twenty-five miles distant. Kansas, at this time, was in fear

of an Indian uprising and consequent massacre of the whites. Conquering Bear's announcement caused no little excitement, and General Curtis was appealed to for help. He sent for Wild Bill, told him of the news brought by Conquering Bear, and asked him what he would advise. Bill replied:

"The Indian is a mighty uncertain animal, and those that profess the greatest friendship are very frequently the most deadly enemies. I'll tell you my idea: you send me back to the Sioux camp with this chief and before I return you can depend on it I will know how many Choctaws are near Lawrence and what they are up to. If I'm not back here in four days, just put it down that I've dropped my scalp."

To this General Curtis answered: "It looks to me as though such a trip would be very hazardous if the hostile Indians are really near Lawrence, unless you should take one or two hundred men with you."

"I don't want any one with me," answered Bill, "except Conquering Bear, and if he deceives

me or is trying to lay some devilish trap, then one of us will lift the other's hair. No, I shall take only my horse Black Nell, and be prepared to leave here for the Indian camp early to-morrow morning."

"Well," responded Curtis, "if you think it possible to penetrate the Indian camp, or learn the exact location and intention of the Choctaws, I think the importance of ascertaining these facts warrants my sending you; therefore, whatever you may require shall be provided and I can only hope for your safe return."

The Indian chief was sent for, and after telling him of General Curtis's wishes, Wild Bill said grimly:

"I shall go with you directly to your people and then I shall expect you to guide me to the hostile camp; but, remember, if you deceive me in the least thing, one of us will have to die."

Conquering Bear assured the general and Wild Bill that his loyalty to the Union and his enmity to the Choctaw alone would have prompted him to lead the Federal troops into the enemy's

camp. On the following day Wild Bill and the Indian started for Lawrence, which they reached the same evening. They lost no time in starting for the Sioux camp, where they remained till after nightfall. The two then proceeded westward. Suddenly a whoop from Conquering Bear showed Bill that he had been betrayed and presently he was surrounded by a band of Choctaws, who rushed in considerable numbers from ambush.

It was now almost pitch dark. Bill could not be plainly seen by his enemies. He killed three Choctaws. Black Nell obeyed his every command. Aided by the Indian war whoop and other signals with which he was familiar, he managed finally to elude the Indians and made his escape without receiving a scratch. Bill never in his life came nearer to losing his scalp.

Four days later Bill made a report to General Curtis of the occurrence, and asked for a week's leave of absence. He then went in search of Conquering Bear. Knowing the Sioux language,

he sought and gained the good-will of a young warrior, called Indian Joe, through whose assistance Conquering Bear was lured to a spot a few miles distant from Lawrence, on the promise of some fallacious reward or other at that point.

Bill suddenly emerged from his hiding place and confronted Conquering Bear. The two stood eyeing each other. According to tradition, Bill produced two pistols and threw one to Conquering Bear, telling him to defend himself. The Indian, who knew and feared the deadly aim of Wild Bill, refused to fight with the pistol. Bill told him that he either had to fight or suffer the death of the dog that he was. Conquering Bear finally chose the knife—the then popular bowie knife. Bill accepted the terms—though he had every justification for shooting the Indian at sight—and instructed his companion to prepare a level spot for the duel. A circle ten feet in diameter was platted in which the contestants were to meet. Bill stepped inside the circle and called to Conquering Bear.

The Indian stood motionless, however, until Bill threatened to shoot him dead if he did not at once engage in combat.

Conquering Bear leaped into the enclosure, holding the bowie knife in his right hand and on a level with his face. The two antagonists glared at each other savagely before commencing the deadly battle. Bill was the first to make a motion, stepping forward one pace and delivering a feint; the Indian drew back and then stopped as if to make a rush. Like enraged lions both sprang at each other, meeting in the centre of the ring, and steel against steel, they clinched for several minutes. A violent struggle now ensued, their dreadful weapons remaining edge to edge. The two now separated for a time, the Indian boy keeping watch. After a lapse of ten minutes they resumed the battle. Bill lunged at the Indian's heart, but a buckle on Conquering Bear's breast averted the blow.

Yet his knife went downward with such force that it cut through the Indian's jacket and opened a fearful gash several inches long in his

Photo from L. B. Hollister, Lead, S. D.

DEADWOOD, S. D., AT THE TIME OF WILD BILL'S ASSASSINATION IN 1876

THE BIRTHPLACE OF WILD BILL AT TROY GROVE, ILL.

side. The Indian made a similar lunge at Bill's heart, but caught him in the left arm and stripped the flesh from the bone. The two combatants were now covered with blood. The Indian made a great exertion, striking at Bill with sharp precision, but Bill parried the effort and instantly thrust his knife through the neck of Conquering Bear, cutting the jugular vein.

And that was the end of Conquering Bear.

This tale has been told in many forms. The apparently impractical feature of it is that Wild Bill would give a treacherous savage an even chance for his life. However, we are not dealing with an ordinary man or with ordinary times. The date of this battle has been set down as January 22, 1865, and a fact which goes far toward substantiating the story is that Bill was wounded about this time.

Wild Bill was deeply grateful to Indian Joe. He took him with him to Kansas City, gave him many advantages, and after a time went back with him to the Sioux reservation on the Niobrara River, where they passed the season

trapping beaver and otter. The killing of Conquering Bear served to raise the reputation of Bill among the Sioux, especially as it happened that the chief was exceedingly unpopular among his own people. On the reservation Bill met a sister of Indian Joe. The name of this young Sioux squaw was Mary Logan. Bill later declared that she was a direct descendant of the famous chief of that name, though there was a goodly amount of white blood in her veins. She was then about eighteen years old, and it is said that Bill rarely mentioned her name without exulting over her beauty.

Mary fell violently in love with Wild Bill. She was not happy except when she was with him. At the earnest solicitation of Joe and his sister, Bill was finally induced to make their home his own during the season.

The Indian girl loved the famous white man so deeply that she could not endure Bill's absence while he was examining the traps, or during his frequent hunts, so she was permitted to go along. This intimate companionship con-

tinued for about six months, during which time Bill was able to teach the Indian girl how to read and write, after a fashion. Notwithstanding this remarkable intimacy, Bill always declared that he left the girl as he found her and that she would readily have sacrificed her life rather than forfeit the jewel of her chastity. At the end of the trapping season, Wild Bill bade Mary Logan adieu and returned to Missouri.

It appears, according to tradition, that in the succeeding year, 1866, a man named Rogers, from St. Louis, discovered Mary Logan among the Sioux. He was charmed by her beauty and proposed marriage. She accepted, not because she reciprocated his affection, but solely because he promised to take her with him to St. Louis, where she expected that she would be able to see Wild Bill. So it was that Mary Logan became Mrs. Rogers. Curiously enough, a short time after her arrival at St. Louis she met Wild Bill. Her joy was declared to be unbounded. When they separated, it was with the promise that he would write to her regularly. Several

months elapsed. Bill kept his word and wrote to Mrs. Rogers every week.

The husband had no knowledge of this correspondence. Instead of destroying the letters, as prudence might have suggested, Mary kept them, cherishing each as a treasure. As might be expected, one of the missives fell into the hands of the husband, and as the language was most affectionate, he became fiercely jealous and accused his wife of infidelity. This she endured without complaint, but when the husband vilified Wild Bill, she became indignant. However, they continued to live together.

Mary and her husband now moved to Kansas City, where still another letter was discovered. The husband severely chastised his wife, and threatened the life of Wild Bill. Mary now resolved to kill him by mixing poison with his coffee—which she did. All these facts she revealed to Wild Bill in a letter, and then disappeared. It was supposed she returned to her people. Bill never heard of her again.

CHAPTER VII

THE DUEL WITH DAVE TUTT

ALTHOUGH the facts of Wild Bill's duel with Dave Tutt, which occurred at Springfield, Missouri, on July 20, 1865, are far better substantiated than those of the McCanles "massacre," the encounter has been viewed in various lights. Some would have it that the shooting was an out-and-out murder; others, pointing to the frontier code and the bitterness engendered by the Civil War, interpret the affair as a deliberate challenge and a formal, if unconventional, duel.

Bill had just returned from hunting among the Sioux and was doubtless seeking diversion, and Springfield was the nearest town where it might be secured. Like the account of the McCanles affair the first mention of the Tutt duel is to be found in George Ward Nichols's article, pub-

lished in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* of February, 1867. Mr. Nichols described Springfield as a sleepy, indolent sort of hamlet, the only indication of violent practices being the revolver which every man wore about his waist. Everyone moved about without an objective. Nobody was in a hurry.

One would not expect that Hickok could find much entertainment in such a place, but, in other descriptions we have of Springfield at the time, we gather that it was what would be called a "wide-open burg." The drowsiness was altogether on the surface. If one liked games of chance—and Bill had a powerful penchant in that direction—his longings could be satisfied in Springfield.

Tradition has it that Bill threw himself heart and soul into gambling. The town was the rendezvous of the most desperate and depraved of those who had served in either army, recently disbanded. Somehow Wild Bill gravitated naturally to such places. Whether he needed the stimulus of excitement, or because he found

a freer and more open field for his sporting proclivities, is open to speculation. But wherever there was turmoil along the border there he was to be found. And the curious thing about it was that he invariably was on the side of law and order.

In Springfield, at that day, there naturally existed a spirit of ill-will between the mustered-out Union and the returning Confederate soldiers. The hot-heads were in constant conflict, but Bill refused to involve himself in any of these quarrels. He is reported as having said:

"When the war closed I buried the hatchet, and I won't fight now unless I'm put upon."

If Dave Tutt had realized that Wild Bill would not be "put upon," there would not have been any trouble between them—but let us follow this story along through its various ramifications. Nichols was not a witness of this encounter, but he had made the acquaintance of a certain Captain Honesty, who gave him a detailed account:

"They say Bill's wild. Now he isn't any sich

thing. I've known him goin' on ter ten years, and he's as civil a disposed person as you'll find he-e-ar-abouts, but he won't be put upon.

"I'll tell you how it happened. But come into the office; thar's a good many round hy'ar as sides with Tutt—the man that's shot—but I tell yer 'twas a fair fight. Take some whisky? No! Well, I will if yer'll excuse me.

"Yer see," continued the Captain, setting his empty glass on the table in an emphatic way, "Bill was up in his room a-playing seven up, four-hand, or some of them pesky games. Bill refused to play with Tutt, who was a professional gambler. You see Bill was a scout on our side durin' the war and Tutt was a reb scout. Bill had killed Tutt's mate and atween one thing and another, there was an unusual hard feelin' atwixt 'em.

"Ever since Dave came back he had tried to pick a row with Bill; so Bill wouldn't play cards with him any more. But Dave stood over the man who was gambling with Bill and lent the feller money. Bill won 'bout two hundred dol-

lars, which made Tutt spiteful mad. Bime-by he says to Bill:

"'Bill, you've got plenty of money—pay me that forty dollars yer owes me in that horse trade.'

"Bill paid him, then Dave said:

"'Yer owes me thirty-five dollars more; yer lost it playing with me t'other night.'

"Dave's style was right provoking, but Bill answered him perfectly gentlemanly:

"'I think yer wrong, Dave. It's twenty-five dollars. I have a memorandum of it in my pocket downstairs. Ef it's thirty-five dollars I'll give it yer.'

"Now Bill's watch was lying on the table. Dave took up the watch, put it in his pocket and said: 'I'll keep this yere watch till yer pay me the thirty-five dollars.'

"That made Bill shooting mad, for don't you see, Colonel, it was a-doubting his honour like, so he got up and looked Dave in the eye and said: 'I don't want to make a row in this house. It's a decent house and I don't want ter injure

the keeper. You'd better put that watch back on the table.'

"But Dave grinned at Bill mighty ugly and walked off with the watch, and kept it several days. All this time Dave's friends were spurring Bill on ter fight; there was no end ter the talk. They blackguarded him in an underhanded way and tried to get up a scrimmage and then they thought they could lay him out. You see Bill had enemies all about. He settled the accounts of a heap of men who lived round here. This is the only place in Missouri whar a reb can come back to live, and to tell yer the truth, Colonel,"—and the captain with an involuntary movement hitched up his revolver-belt as he said with expressive significance: "they don't stay long round here!

"Well, as I was saying, these rebs don't like ter see a man walking round town who they knew in the reb army as one of their men, who they now know was on our side, all the time he was sending us information sometimes from Pap Price's own headquarters. But they couldn't

provoke Bill into a row, for he's afeared of hisself when he gets awful mad and he allers left his shootin' irons in his room when he went out. One day these cusses drew their pistols on him and dared him to fight, and then they told him that Tutt was a-goin' ter pack that watch across the Squar' next day at noon.

"I heard of this, for everybody was talkin' about it on the street, and so I went after Bill and found him in his room cleanin' and greasin' and loadin' his revolvers.

"'Now, Bill,' says I, 'yer're going to git inter a fight.'

"'Don't you bother yerself, Captain,' says he, 'it's not the first time I've been in a fight, and these d—— hounds have put on me long enough. You don't want me to give up my honour, do yer?'

"'No, Bill,' says I, 'yer must keep yer honour.'

"Next day, about noon, Bill went down on the Squar'. He had said that Dave Tutt shouldn't pack that watch across the Squar' unless dead men could walk.

"When Bill got on ter the Squar' he found a crowd standing in the corner of the street by which he entered the Squar', which is from the south, you know. In this crowd I saw a lot of Tutt's friends; some were cousins of his'n just back from the reb army, and they jeered Bill and boasted that Dave was a-goin' to pack that watch across the Squar' as he promised.

"Then Bill saw Tutt standing near the courthouse, which yer remember is on the west side so that the crowd was behind Bill.

"Just then Tutt, who was alone, started from the courthouse and walked out into the Squar' and Bill moved away from the crowd toward the west side of the Squar'. 'Bout fifteen paces brought them opposite to each other and about fifty yards apart. Tutt then showed his pistol. Bill had kept a sharp eye on him and before Tutt could p'int it Bill had his'n out.

"At that moment you could have heard a pin drop in that Squar'. Both Tutt and Bill fired, but one discharge followed the other so quick that it is hard to say which went off first. Tutt

was a famous shot, but he missed this time; the ball from his pistol went over Bill's head. The instant Bill fired, without waiting to see ef he had hit Tutt, he wheeled about on his heels and pointed at Tutt's friends, who had already drawn their weapons.

"'Aren't you satisfied, gentlemen?' cried Bill, as cool as an alligator. 'Put up yer shootin'-irons or there'll be more dead men here.' And they put 'em up and said it was a fair fight."

"What became of Tutt?" was asked of the captain, who had stopped at this point of his story and was deliberately engaged in refilling his empty glass.

"Oh, Dave? He was as plucky a feller as ever drew trigger, but Lord bless yer, 'twas no use. Bill never shoots twice at the same man and his ball went through Dave's heart. He stood stock-still for a second or two, raised his arm as if ter fire again, then he swayed a little, staggered three or four steps and fell dead.

"Bill and his friends wanted ter have the thing done regular, so we went up ter the Justice and

Bill delivered himself up. A jury was drawn; Bill was tried and cleared the next day. It was proved that it was a case of self-defence. Don't yer see, Colonel?"

Nichols couldn't say that he saw the point quite so clearly.

"Well, well!" replied the captain with an air of compassion, "you haven't drunk any whisky, that's what's the matter with yer." And then, putting his hand on Nichols's shoulder with a half-mysterious, half-conscious look in his face, he muttered, in a whisper:

"The fact is thar was an undercurrent of a woman in that fight."

That last touch completed the picture, but what woman had to do with this affair is not disclosed. Every time Bill got into trouble it was generally hinted that the flutter of a skirt was the prime cause of it.

The next circumstantial account of the duel between Wild Bill and Tutt is found in Buel's "Heroes of the Plains," written fifteen years after

Nichols's account, which adds some reasonably consistent material.

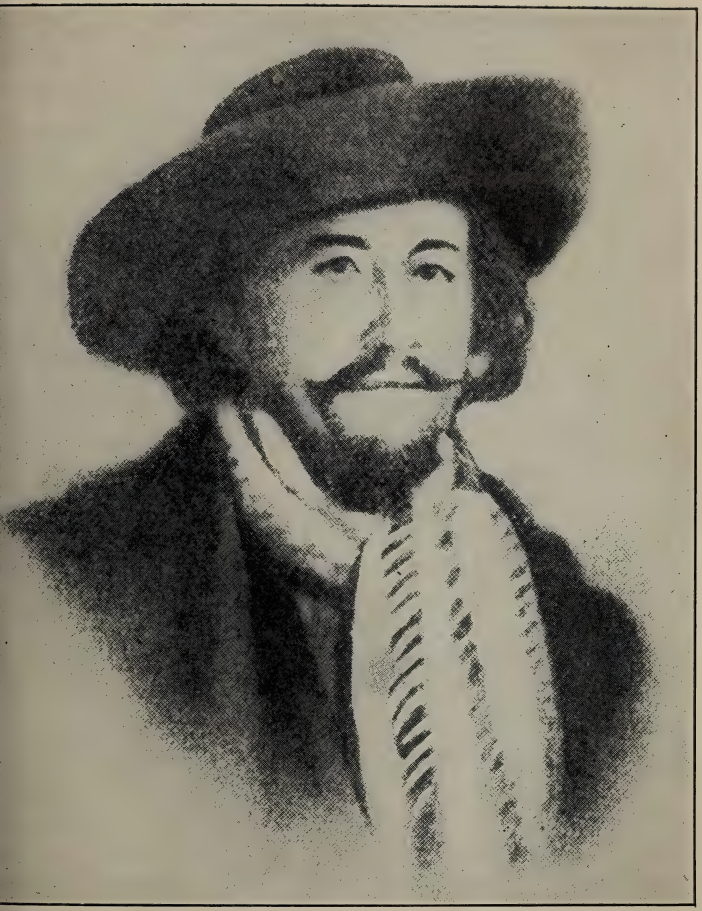
Indeed, his story, which he is supposed to have had from Bill himself, is much clearer as to what happened than the talk with the reputed Captain Honesty. It is singular that Buel made a mistake of two years as to the date of the duel, placing it September 14, 1867, while it occurred on July 20, 1865. It was Buel who indicated that it was the open gambling that attracted Bill to the place, for he says Bill gambled with all the naturalness that characterizes a duckling when it first strikes the water, not so much for profit, perhaps, as for the excitement it afforded.

Buffalo Bill used to tell an anecdote which threw a sidelight on Bill's poker habits at Springfield. Sitting by the table where Wild Bill was playing for high stakes, Buffalo Bill observed that his friend was pretending to be sleepy and inattentive. This excited his interest, with the result that he kept a close watch of the other players. Buffalo Bill sensed at once that there was something in the air. It was not long before

he discovered that one of the players was dropping cards into his hat, which he held in his lap. That was a proceeding to excite the most dormant curiosity. Meanwhile, Bill kept right on shamming drowsiness. The ante had been raised several times, especially by the person who had been dropping cards in his hat. Bill stayed in, meeting every raise. Finally, the man with the hat picked a hand out of his reserve, placed his hat on his head and raised Bill a hundred dollars. Bill came back with a raise of two hundred. The other covered it, and as he did so Bill reached down for one of his pistols and pointed it at the player's head.

"I am calling the hand that is in your hat!" he said.

Bill gathered in the money on the table with his left hand, still pointing the pistol at the player wearing the hat. He asked if any of the players had any objections to offer, and as none seemed to have any, young Cody and Wild Bill left the place. Then it was that Bill said to his young friend:



DAVID C. McCANLES

SARAH SHULL (KATE SHELL) DE VALED
The woman in the McCanles mystery.

"Billy, I don't want you ever to learn it, but that is one of my favourite poker tricks. It always wins against crooked players."

However, Buel states that Tutt had come to Springfield for the express purpose of killing Bill. Poker merely afforded an excuse for a quarrel, and Buel's account of the game is quite different from that given by Captain Honesty. It is described as a fifty-dollar limit game in which Bill played in bad luck and lost several hundred dollars. He was short twenty-five dollars at the end of the game. It dawned on him that he had been cheated and he determined that night never to play with Tutt again.

The next day, however, Bill borrowed fifty dollars from Tutt, and with this stake managed to win a considerable sum. Three evenings after the first game with Tutt, it was proposed by the latter that they have another game. Bill refused and Tutt offered to stake a friend against him.

The incident of Bill winning the money from Tutt's friend is practically the same given by

Captain Honesty, except that the latter says that Tutt kept the watch several days, while Buel's narrative states that Bill told him he had better put the watch on the table or somebody might get badly hurt. Tutt, starting to leave the room, replied:

"I'll just keep the watch all the same, and if you want it bad enough you can meet me in the public square to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, for I intend to carry it across the square at that hour."

To this Bill is reported as saying:

"You'll never get across that place with my watch unless dead men can walk."

The circumstances of the meeting of the two men are the same in both accounts. But Buel has nothing to say of a feminine adjunct to the story.

In later years this incident in Bill's life has been told in various ways, only the story as given by Captain Honesty—probably a euphemistic name hit upon by Nichols—has been followed in the main. It is the guess of the writer that

Honesty was Kingsbury. One interesting variation is that given by Dudley Reid in his "A Trip to the Ozarks," in which he says the watch was one Bill prized highly, it having been presented to him by his mother, and it was his understanding that he was to be allowed to redeem the watch at the end of the game. That was the cause of the duel.

I lately asked my old friend, Frank J. Price, of Lackawaxen, Pennsylvania, what his recollections of the duel might be. He had lived as a boy in Springfield when it took place. He replied that he was but five years old at the time, so that all his information regarding the event necessarily was hearsay. The incident occurred immediately in front of his father's store, and he said that his father was one of the first to reach Tutt after he had fallen. Mr. Price states that "Father always looked upon that killing as a cold-blooded murder." And Mr. Price adds: "However, Wild Bill was cleared by the jury."

A curious account of this episode in Wild Bill's career is to be discovered in "The History of

Greene County, Missouri," 1883—published two years after Buel's account. The writer of this version agrees with Buel that Springfield at that time was the resort of hard characters, newly returned from the war; that ruffians of both armies were then seeking a livelihood not associated with hard work. This writer says Wild Bill as a scout had become well acquainted with danger, and then adds: "Being by nature a ruffian, he soon became a desperado." This, of course, is mere imagination, for Wild Bill was neither a ruffian nor a desperado in any sense of the terms.

The county analyst says that Tutt came to Springfield from Yellville, Arkansas, and adds that "he also was a ruffian and a crack pistol-shot." The game of cards took place at the Lyon House and not only did Bill lose his Waltham to Tutt, but also his diamond pin and ring. This is the first time that Bill has been described as wearing jewellery. And the historian says, as in the reports of the others, that Wild Bill and Dave Tutt fought their duel simply because the

latter persisted in wearing his watch on the street, and thus disclosing the fact that Wild Bill "had got busted in a poker game."

Tutt, in all these accounts, seemed to place a high value on the fact that he had cleaned out Wild Bill and possessed his watch, while Bill was insistent that Tutt should not wear his watch in public. The whole matter seems piffling in the extreme, yet it is necessary to take into account that the frontier code was not like ours, and for Tutt to carry Wild Bill's watch was a slur on the ability of the latter which would destroy his prestige in the community.

The county historian drops the information that Bill killed Tutt at a distance of seventy-five yards. He writes that Bill's was a chance shot, and adds, "For when Bill was here he was not considered a fine shot at all." If this statement be true, it helps to explain the light-hearted and boisterous manner in which Tutt provoked the duel, though Bill's reputation as a rifle and revolver shot should have been well known from

his exploits in the war. Chance shots—at seventy-five yards—don't happen, and Bill never in any of his encounters missed his man.

His confidence in his own ability is seen in the way he whirled to confront Tutt's friends after his first shot, without waiting to see whether Tutt had been killed or not. Bill knew, apparently, the instant he fired that his bullet was mortal, and Nichols's account of this detail is probably accurate and certainly quite probable.

Neither Nichols nor Buel makes any mention of the court proceedings, but according to the anonymous author of the county history Bill, seeing that his shot had taken effect, handed his pistols over to the sheriff who came up, and informed that officer he was his prisoner. Within a short time after his surrender, Bill was seen leisurely riding Black Nell up the street.

The Circuit Court being in session, Bill was promptly indicted, arrested on a bench warrant, and brought to trial. He was vigorously prosecuted by attorney, Major R. W. Ryan, and ably defended by the Hon. John S. Phelps. Wit-

nesses testified that they heard two shots, the first coming from near where Tutt's body was found. The empty chamber of Tutt's revolver was exhibited and upon the ground of "reasonable doubt" that Wild Bill was not the aggressor, the jury acquitted him. There were some, however, who maintained that he was cleared because he was an ex-Federal and a Radical, and because the man he shot was a "rebel." Certain it is that the jury were all men who could take the "Drake oath."

A prominent attorney, according to tradition, harangued the crowd from the balcony of the courthouse and denounced the verdict as against the evidence, and there was talk of lynching Bill, but nothing was done and he was allowed to live.

Tutt's body was first buried in the old cemetery inside the city limits, but in 1883 it was exhumed by Lewis Tutt, a former slave of the Tutt family, and reinterred in Maple Park Cemetery.

In considering a case like this, as has already been pointed out, it is necessary to take into account the customs of the time. But the claim

that Bill had deliberately murdered Tutt is not substantiated in any record of the incident. It was an old-time duel and nothing more; and one in which Wild Bill left the field of honour victorious. Tutt had the same opportunity as his adversary; but no man, according to all accounts, had more than a slender chance with Wild Bill in a pistol battle. Tutt's foolhardiness cost him his life.

CHAPTER VIII

A BLUE RIBBON OUTBURST OF GUNS

SPRINGFIELD, so far as Wild Bill was concerned, now became an unsalubrious place to live in. As Dave Tutt undoubtedly had many friends in the town—and these friends of a desperate character—Wild Bill probably deemed it the better part of valour to seek pastures new. This is a mere surmise, however, for he was never known to have been scared out of any town by the lawless contingent. Danger was an element that he seemed to thrive on. It may have been that his poker luck had changed for the worse. Tradition has it that he was a persistent dallier with picture cards, but we have yet to learn that he ever had any extraordinary luck in their manipulation.

Kit Carson, in 1867, was nearing the end of his days at Santa Fe. Through an adventure in

New Mexico, Wild Bill won from the old trapper the tribute that in all his career he had not known Bill's equal for personal fearlessness. This encomium was doubtless a source of great satisfaction to Wild Bill, for we have seen that as a youth Kit Carson was his idol.

At that time there was no railroad west of Topeka, and Bill travelled along the Santa Fe Trail with a dozen cowboys who were driving a herd of steers to La Junta, Colorado. Reaching Las Vegas, the outfit met with a sheriff and officers who were about to round up two Mexican bandits that had been committing depredations in the neighbourhood. Bill joined the posse, and rode on alone far in advance of it. Coming unexpectedly on the camp of the outlaws he dashed into their midst, shot one to death, and wounded and captured the other. The sheriff and his men spurred up when they heard the shots, only to discover that Bill had one bandit securely tied and the other ready for Boot Hill.

The next we hear of him he is on a hunting trip in Nebraska. Finding the beaver scarce in

the northern part of the territory, he moved to the south hoping for better fortune. On the way he stopped at a saloon and ran into serious trouble. That was his specialty. Bill ever stood for peace, but it appears that there was always somebody about who delighted to "put upon him," as Nichols says. Bad characters with loose gun habits always seemed to have a way of inviting destruction, and, when Bill was around, of being accommodated.

Entering the saloon, he called for a drink. In this haven of bibulous happiness there were several cowpunchers with their skins pretty well soaked with firewater. Five of the cow persons, seeing Bill having a nice little nip all by himself, thought it would be a good notion to heckle him. Bill paid no heed to their palaver, but when he was about to raise the glass to his lips one of the merrymakers slapped him on the back with such force that it almost upset the bar, and caused the whisky to splatter over his face.

Naturally trouble ensued. Without a word Bill turned on the back-slammer and slammed

him in the face with such force that he was out of the fracas for good and all. The four remaining cowboys moved toward Bill for a free-for-all fight. He attempted to mollify their thirst for gore, but without success.

It became evident that there would soon be shooting—a move which was eminently in Bill's line—so it is said that he offered to fight the four cowboys collectively with pistols at any distance from five to fifteen paces, as they might determine. And so it was arranged, with the barkeeper to act as umpire. Fifteen paces was agreed upon as the distance. The four men took their positions four feet apart in a line facing Bill, with the understanding that when the bartender gave the word they might all blaze away at will.

"One—two—three—*fire!*" called the bartender.

The first cowpuncher on the left of the line dropped to Bill's first bullet, but at the same instant Wild Bill himself was shot through the right arm. He transferred his gun to his left

hand, and with his usual deadly accuracy dropped his three remaining enemies with three rapid shots, without himself being again scratched. Three of the cowboys were shot through the head, and the fourth was hit in the right cheek, a part of his face being torn away. This man, John Harkness, survived, and was living in Kansas City in 1878. The three dead, Buel informs us, were Seth Beeber, James Slater, and Frank Dowder.

Wild Bill had the wound in his arm bandaged and set out on Black Nell for Kansas City, which he reached in seven days. The wound, however, proved more serious than he had at first supposed, for it served to confine him to his room for several weeks and caused him great pain. By the spring of 1869, however, he had recovered sufficiently to seek entertainment afield.

In the autumn of that year an expedition was being formed to gather in the Cheyenne chief, Black Kettle, and his followers, and return them to their reservation. These hard-fighting savages had broken out of bounds and murdered

many settlers in western Kansas. After the Republican River massacre they had slaughtered whomsoever they encountered along the Washita and Canadian rivers.

Such service was in Wild Bill's line, more particularly as his old friend Will Cody, now become known as Buffalo Bill, was to be one of the scouts. Gen. W. H. Penrose had one command, and he selected Wild Bill as his chief of scouts, while Gen. E. A. Carr commanded the second column and chose Buffalo Bill for a like position. The Cheyennes were pursued for four weeks and finally were brought to a halt on the north shore of the Washita, near Antelope Hills.

In the Wild Bill saga we now come upon another superb—and wholly imaginery—exploit. Both Buel's "Heroes of the Plains" and Kelsey's "Pioneer Heroes" narrate the following heroic yarn:

Ambushed in a thick woods, it was only by the most terrific fighting that the Indians were dislodged. The prestige of Black Kettle was so great among the Indians that many Arapahoes

and Kiowas, renegades under Little Raven and Satanta, both renowned chiefs, had joined forces with him. General Penrose opened the battle. General Carr moved around and attacked the Indians from the rear with such force that they were driven from their positions. Their retreat was immediately followed up by both commands. The white troopers yelled and charged, and presently the Indians were completely routed. The heroes of the day were Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, who dashed into the very midst of the Indians and killed no fewer than fifty savages.

Wild Bill's intrepidity in this encounter nearly cost him his life, say both accounts. Realizing that the battle had gone against him, the notorious Black Kettle sought safety in flight. Wild Bill discovered this move, and pursued him through a gauntlet of spears, caught up with him, and plunged a bowie knife into his heart. But Bill himself did not escape unhurt, for he was wounded in the left hip by a lance. Attacked by several score of Indians he was unable to take the chief's scalp. It was only through

the pluckiness of Buffalo Bill, who dashed in among the Indians and dealt death right and left, that Wild Bill's life was saved, conclude Buel and Kelsey.

This is all very well, but the unfortunate thing about this incident is that it cannot be true. But Buffalo Bill liked the yarn so well that it was copied in his booklet entitled "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World," published in 1901, where the story is attributed to Buel.

In point of fact, Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill were snowbound with Penrose and Carr on the Canadian River, while the battle took place on the Washita, Gen. George A. Custer, with the Seventh Cavalry, being the commanding general. California Joe, and not Wild Bill or Buffalo Bill, was the scout of the expedition. Black Kettle was killed in the battle, but by whom General Custer did not know. He lost his life in the general mêlée.

Lieut. General Philip H. Sheridan, General-in-Chief of the army, in his report to be found in

the U. S. House Executive Documents, Vol. 2, 1869–70, narrates how Penrose and Carr were on the Canadian River when General Custer fought the Battle of the Washita. In considering this matter one comes to the inevitable conclusion that Buel was either an inveterate prevaricator, or else was duped by some "Captain Kingsbury."

At the conclusion of this Indian campaign Bill was at Fort Leavenworth, where he received a letter from his sister Lydia telling him that his mother was in poor health and suggesting that he come home to see her. The fact that he was suffering from a knife or spear wound (which he could not have received in battle) lends credence to the story of the duel with Conquering Bear.

Bill passed two months under his mother's roof, and there regained his former rugged health. He had been away from his home thirteen years, reaching Troy Grove on April 3, 1869. His mother, then in her sixty-fifth year, was in the doorway to welcome him. James Butler Hickok

had, since she had seen him, acquired nationwide fame as Wild Bill. His friend Buffalo Bill has stated that at this time his name was better known than that of the President of the United States.

Of this visit of Bill's to Troy Grove we have some interesting information furnished by Bill's sister, Lydia, to the Chicago *Record* of December 26, 1896.

"An Indian spear struck him in the hip," wrote Lydia Hickok, "the point bending where it struck the bone so that he had to stop and get off his horse to pull it out. He paid little attention to the wound and rode to Fort Leavenworth, where there was a letter from me telling him that his mother was not well, and asking him to come home. He came, but said nothing of his wound for several days, though he had Doctor Thomas of Mendota, Illinois, dress it and care for it. We learned of it only when he asked for some lint to put a fresh bandage on it.

"Later it became necessary to lance the wound and scrape the bone. The doctor came one

evening to perform the operation, but Bill would not take chloroform. The doctor made four cuts outward from the wound, making a cross with the lance. Then he drew the flesh back and began to scrape the bone. I was holding the lamp and began to feel myself growing faint. 'Here, give it to me,' said Bill. He took the lamp and held it while the doctor scraped away, never flinching once during the operation."

This Illinois home at Troy Grove, the birthplace of Wild Bill, was torn down in September, 1925. The empty house was in such a dilapidated state that the state fire marshal notified the owners that it should either be torn down or made habitable. There had been some talk of having the Historical Society of Illinois take over the property and making a memorial of it, but instead it was given over to Elwood Burris of Troy Grove to tear down for what lumber he could get out of it.

Up to this period of his life, Wild Bill had not visited the city of Chicago, but seventy-five miles northeast of Troy Grove. In that city, on

Lake Michigan, resided his boyhood friend, Herman Baldwin, who met Wild Bill at the railroad station and warmly welcomed him. After a tour of the principal places of interest in the city, Bill was introduced to several prominent citizens.

On the evening after his arrival Bill and his friend visited a billiard hall attached to the St. James Hotel. Wild Bill's garb was that of a frontiersman—buckskin clothes trimmed with leather fringe. Wherever he went he attracted much attention. That evening several hoodlums in the billiard hall took upon themselves to heckle the stranger. They concluded that it would be a lark to incite him into battle. One of these rowdies, according to report, accosted Bill as follows:

"Say, you, Leather Breeches, where did you come from?"

"I came from a section of the country where everybody minds his own business—a place you never saw," responded Bill.

"Why, the Indian Scalper is a little sharp, but

there are some feathers in his wings that ought to be cut," another of the roughs suggested.

To this second insult Bill paid no attention because he anticipated the object of the crowd and was anxious to avoid trouble. A third one, however, considered his turn had come to say something witty, and addressed Bill:

"I suppose that everybody in your country dresses in rawhide and washes every morning in a pot of fresh blood. Ain't that so, Wild-Bull-of-the-Woods?"

"Well, a country of that kind is better than the one you came from, where there isn't a fellow who knows his own father," replied Bill.

This retort created a tempest among the irascible hoodlums. Another quickly walked toward Bill and fairly spit out between his teeth the inquiry:

"Do you mean to say that our mothers are not honest women?"

"I mean," answered Bill, "if they are, it was d——d bad business they got into when you were born."

With these remarks the battle began. The rowdies gathered billiard cues and started in to belabour the man of the prairie. Bill, on account of his late wounds, was not in first-class fighting trim, but once the battle was on he became his old self. He grabbed a billiard cue and began the onslaught.

His friend Baldwin entered in the mêlée and proved an able assistant. At the end of a few minutes the Chicago ruffians, to the number of seven, were stretched out on the floor. Bill meanwhile had been severely punished. He returned to Troy Grove on the following day, his head in bandages. It was but a short time, however, before he was again afield.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE PLAINS WITH THE WILSON PARTY

NOT long after the Tutt duel Wild Bill's fame became nation-wide. While there had been various stories of his prowess published from time to time in Eastern journals, it was the letters of Henry M. Stanley to the New York *Herald* in 1866 that served to bring him into particular prominence. In that year a party of government officials, appointed by a special act of Congress for the purpose, paid a visit to the Indian tribes then on government reservations. Wild Bill was the guide of this party and Henry M. Stanley accompanied the commission as a special correspondent.

Mr. Stanley in his book, "My Early Travels and Adventures," has an alleged interview with Wild Bill that has all the air of being a fabrication. In this reference to Bill, Mr. Stanley

says that he asked him how many men he had killed, and after a little deliberation, he replied: "I suppose that I have killed considerably over a hundred." Asked, "How old were you when you killed your first white man?" he is said to have replied, "I was twenty-eight years old." Now that is open to question on the face of it, and for the reason that Bill was but twenty-nine when he was on the plains with Stanley.

The McCanles affair occurred in 1861 when Bill was twenty-four, it is certain that as a sharpshooter during the war he killed upwards of fifty men, and the killing of Dave Tutt took place in 1865 when Bill was not yet twenty-eight.

As reported by Stanley his first killing took place at Leavenworth, Kansas. After Bill retired one night, five men entered his room. They announced that they were going to kill him for what money he had on his person, but, says Stanley, Bill was first on the draw and killed one of the men and wounded the others. The next day the cellar of this hotel was searched and the bodies of eleven men murdered by these

villains were unearthed. This is a sample of the many cock-and-bull stories that were rife on the frontier, and it is the writer's opinion that Stanley remembered it years later, and palmed it off as a personal interview with Wild Bill.

It was because of the notoriety disseminated by the Stanley articles that Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts and afterward Vice-President during the Grant administration, asked Bill to act as guide for a party to the Far West. Henry Wilson himself was an interesting personage. His original name is given as Jeremiah Jones Colbraith. He was the son of a foreign labourer; became apprentice to a farmer and subsequently was employed as a shoemaker in Natick, Massachusetts. He was a prominent anti-slavery advocate and became a leader of the Free-Soil party. After running without success for various offices in his native state, he was finally elected United States senator from Massachusetts in 1855 and was reëlected three times. He was one of the organizers of the Republican party and wrote several works on anti-

slavery. He was elected Vice-President in 1872 and died in 1875.

While recuperating at his mother's home at Troy Grove, Bill received the following letter from Senator Wilson:

Washington, D. C., May 17, 1869.

JAMES B. HICKOK, ESQ.

DEAR SIR:

A party consisting of several gentlemen, ladies and myself, desire to spend a few weeks in the Far West during the warm season, and I hope it will be our fortune to secure your excellent services as our guide. I have heard much concerning your wonderful exploits in the West, and of such a character, too, as to commend you highly for efficiency in the scouting service of the government. If it be possible for you to accompany our party as guide sometime during the following month, please write me at once at Willard's Hotel, Washington, indicating what compensation you will expect, and also from what point in Kansas we had best start on the tour. I shall leave to you the selection of a pleasant route, as your general acquaintance with the places of interest between the Missouri River and Rocky Mountains better qualifies you for deciding the trip that promises the most attractions.

Hoping to hear from you at your earliest convenience,

I am,

Yours truly,

(*Signed*) HENRY WILSON.

Wild Bill fixed his compensation for this trip at five hundred dollars, and replied at some

length to Mr. Wilson's letter, giving a detailed description of various points which would likely prove of interest to the party. On the 12th of June, 1869, the Wilson party with Wild Bill as guide left Hays City suitably provided with vehicles and a fine commissary department.

Curiously, the men of the party were dressed in the mode of the time—the tight-fitting trousers, cutaway coats, and top hats. Mrs. Wilson and the ladies accompanying her showed better sartorial judgment. Mrs. Wilson entered with verve into this enterprise and proved a most agreeable hostess. She is reported to have expressed herself to Wild Bill in the following terms:

"Now," said she to Bill, "you are with an unsophisticated crowd of Yankees who know just as much about life on the plains as they do about the person who first discovered there was a man in the moon. There is no doubt, too, but that some of these younger ones are badly in love, and this only serves to make their simplicity more apparent. I want you, Mr. Hickok, to keep a

protecting eye on the party, discover their good and indifferent points if you can, determine which are most courageous, and so forth and see that none of them get into trouble."

The party travelled over a vast expanse of territory. They visited the canyons of the Arkansas and the point on the Republican River where the Cheyennes had perpetrated one of their most terrible massacres. Wild Bill proved a great favourite with the party. From time to time he gave examples of his remarkable marksmanship with pistol and rifle. Nothing occurred to mar the pleasure of this expedition, the weather being delightful throughout the entire trip. After five weeks the party returned to Hays City, all alike regretting the termination of the excursion.

On the day of the departure of the tourists from Hays City Senator Wilson gave a dinner at the hotel in Wild Bill's honour, and at the conclusion of the feast, he addressed Wild Bill in the most complimentary terms. He referred to his reputation and said that he was one of the

characters most essential to the settlement of the West. He then opened a case containing two of the finest ivory-handled pistols ever made, and he presented them to Wild Bill as a souvenir of what, he said, was the most delightful trip he had ever experienced.

These were Wild Bill's famous "white-handled guns"—the prototype of the armament carried by hundreds of heroes in Western fiction.

CHAPTER X

MARSHAL OF HAYS CITY AND ABILENE

WILD BILL never wandered far from home before returning to the end of the rails—either to Abilene, Hays City, or Cheyenne. He was not fond of city life; he was a natural-born son of the plains. Having spent so much of his life in hunting, trapping, and acting as a scout, these various towns served as jumping-off places into a free and untrammelled existence.

These hamlets came into being principally as shipping places for the longhorn cattle of Texas. They became points where gathered the gambler, the prostitute, the cowboy, and the bad man. There were no courts of justice as we know them; it was the town marshal who served as the judge, jury, and executioner. He was the law. Some of the famous officers were Tom Smith, Hector

Thomas, William Tilghman, and Patrick Shugrue, but the greatest of all was James Butler Hickok, otherwise Wild Bill. He was the top-sawyer of his class. Like the others, he was the scavenger of bad men. He brought order out of chaos and made life endurable for the rightfully disposed who lived in his jurisdiction.

Following his trip to the West as guide to the Wilson party, Wild Bill was open for an engagement and this presently came to him in the guise of the marshalship of Hays City, then the terminus of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. After a series of depredations by gun-toting bad men, the town had come to the end of its patience. Wild Bill had already acquired a wide reputation as the possessor of reckless courage as well as an unswerving purpose to put down disorder. He was elected marshal of Hays City on September 8, 1869.

At once things began to happen. In Hays City at that time was Jack Strawhan (some have it Sam Strawhorn), a notorious desperado. His gun bore many notches and he had boasted of his

ability to clean out Hays City and its new marshal. Wild Bill was acquainted with this man-killer, having on a former occasion assisted the marshal of Ellsworth in rounding him up. Strawhan had avowed his purpose then of perforating Bill at the first opportunity, and when he learned Wild Bill had become marshal of Hays City, he paid that town a visit for the sole purpose of carrying out his design.

Wild Bill was sitting in Drum's saloon with a party of friends on October 19, 1869, when he saw Strawhan enter the room by a side door. Bill had been informed of the bad man's threats, and he kept a watchful eye upon him. Assuming a careless manner the desperado strolled toward the bar. When within a few feet of Wild Bill he jerked out a navy revolver and started to raise it, but Bill, with his usual alertness, whipped out his own gun and sent a bullet through Strawhan's brain. The bad man was given a speedy funeral.

The citizens were so elated over the blotting-out of the notorious Strawhan that the town band serenaded Wild Bill that night. Life became

quiet in Hays City for several weeks, but in December Bill Mulvey, a notorious thug of St. Joseph, wandered into town. Mulvey, famous for being redundant with his gun, filled himself with the extract of condensed lightning sold over the bars and proceeded to stand the town on its head. He ranted and yelled in the streets, then started out to smash every window and lamp that caught his eye.

As Wild Bill was in another part of the town, a constable attempted to place Mulvey under arrest. The attempt failed. Things had reached such a pass that somebody hurried to get Wild Bill—but when the marshal reached Mulvey he found the bad man with a revolver in each hand threatening destruction to any one who came near him. Bill approached him quietly and informed him he was under arrest for disorderly conduct.

Arrest of this mild sort meant nothing at all to Mulvey. He pointed two revolvers at Bill's face and yelled that he held the winning hand.

"I can't beat that pair," Wild Bill answered.

"No, I guess you can't!" Mulvey yelled. "And since you're so fresh, it will be a good thing for me to hang you up until you dry!"

With two guns thrust in his face and a desperado behind them quite willing to shoot, Wild Bill employed a stratagem which has since become famous. He backed off two or three steps and raised his hand protestingly.

"Don't shoot him—he's only in fun!" he called out.

Mulvey turned, expecting to confront a deputy approaching from behind. In the instant that his attention was distracted Bill snatched out a revolver and dropped him with a bullet in the brain.

That Wild Bill was something more than the mere queller of bad men, that there was something superior in his nature, is very well proved by Harry Young, who was the bartender of the saloon in Deadwood where Wild Bill was assassinated. Setting down his remembrances of his first meeting with Bill when the latter was marshal of turbulent Hays City, he says:

"I had been dancing all night in one of the numerous dance halls, as was the general custom of strangers looking for pleasure and entertainment. Morning found me waiting outside for one of the dance-hall girls for whom I had formed a boyish fancy. The night's entertainment had proven costly to me, my finances having dwindled from forty dollars to a dollar and a half. This extravagance on my part had been noted by Wild Bill, unknown to me. As I stood on the sidewalk, deliberating, someone touched me on the shoulder.

"I turned and found myself face to face with the finest-looking man I have ever seen or expect to see; a man who excited my greatest admiration. He was about six feet two inches in height; perfectly formed and of strong physique. He had long auburn hair and clear blue eyes—eyes that showed kindness and friendship to all except the evil-doer, to whom they meant the reverse. I was naturally drawn toward him, and instantly felt that no matter how tough the town or its lawless characters, I had met a friend.

"He asked me where I hailed from and I replied: 'From the Sante Fe Construction.'

"He gave me some very wholesome advice regarding spending my money so foolishly and asked me what I was doing at Hays City. I told him I was looking for work. After a long pause, during which he appeared to be sizing me up, he asked me if I could drive a six-mule team. I could not, and frankly told him so. He evidently thought I could learn quickly, for he took me into a near-by saloon and taught me how to tie a government hame-string. The Government at that time used a leather strap with a knot on the end of it instead of a buckle and tongue.

"The next morning he went with me to Fort Hays, two and a half miles distant. There we met the corral boss, and Wild Bill asked him to put me to work, stating that he had taken a fatherly interest in me and wanted to see if I could get along in good shape. The corral boss asked if I could drive a six-mule team. To which I replied: 'Yes.' A mule collar was thrown on

the ground and I was told to tie on the hames, which I did. He turned to Bill with a broad grin and remarked, 'You have drilled him well.' He then told me to remain at the post and he would put me to work. During the day I got acquainted with some of the mule drivers, who showed me how to harness a six-mule team.

"The second morning Bill came out to see how I was getting along, and to his astonishment, found me driving a six-mule team. He rode by my side for some distance, giving me pointers that afterward were very useful to me. I worked at the post for six months, during which time I saw a great deal of Wild Bill, as I was in town every night."

Another interesting fact about Bill as marshal is that when some Easterner wandered into town Bill made it his business that he should not be molested by the lawless element of the place.

From all accounts Bill had a powerful penchant for the observance of law. He was not one to hold others to the letter, and not be obedient to it himself. This admirable trait of character

was frequently observed during his marshalships of Hays City and Abilene.

On one occasion an Eastern rowdy dropped into Hays City. At various times he had heckled Bill as to his fighting qualities, and had offered to adjourn to the street to settle the matter. To these invitations, Bill had replied that he did not allow any fist fighting in the town, and that rule applied to himself as well as to others. This obstreperous individual finally taunted Bill beyond endurance, with the result that he was invited to visit the outskirts of the town. It is evident that this venturesome party had not taken into account that Bill was built like a wedge with enormously broad shoulders, his body tapering to his feet. He was a quiet, peaceful person, but when aroused a terrible antagonist with fists as well as pistols. It is needless to add that the ruffian in question was given a beating that he was not soon to forget.

When a town ordinance was promulgated, Bill saw to it that it applied not only to the turbulent rowdies, but to the well-to-do. An old resident

of Abilene informs the writer that when Bill saw a woman on the street whose facial and sartorial splendours had no more reserve than a druggist's show window, he promptly ordered her home.

When a ban was placed on gambling, that meant to Bill gambling not only in the saloons, but in the homes. Finding a game of whist going on in the home of a local banker he demanded that it cease. The players showed no disposition to obey his orders, so Bill pulled out his pistols to command respect for the law. The game stopped.

We have seen that Bill was a devotee of poker and faro; but once these games were banned, he marched into the saloons with cocked pistols and smashed the gambling apparatus if he found it in use.

He fairly crushed the town into order. Placards were posted on the roads leading into the town to the effect that cowboys must deposit their weapons at the saloons or at the city clerk's office. When his order was disobeyed, the mar-

shal beat the offending one over the head with one of his revolvers.

On one occasion some of the members of the city council objected to a certain ordinance. H. A. Hardy, who afterward became mayor of Omaha, was the city clerk. One day he called for a vote; whereupon, four members left the room, breaking the quorum. The mayor called for the marshal. One of the councilmen had his office in the building. Bill went to his room, grabbed him and threw him over his shoulder, and carried him, kicking and yelling, into the council chamber. By such strenuous proceedings Marshal Hickok brought order out of chaos.

For a person who invariably walked the paths of peace, he was when provoked, or "put upon," as he termed it, a spectacle of belligerency. During Bill's overlordship of Hays City, there came to town a professional pugilist named Patterson who opened a gymnasium there to teach the so-called manly art of self-defence. One night, shortly after his arrival, Patterson dropped into a crowded saloon. The conversa-

tion turned on the prowess of certain Westerners, Wild Bill being mentioned as being the handiest all-around man of the frontier. In reply to this, the Professor remarked:

"Now, look here, I've heard about this man Wild Bill; I would like very much to meet him, and if he's got the pluck to stand before me I'll show him how little he knows about the manly art."

Bill happened to be in the room at the time, and he was pointed out to the Professor. Going up to Bill he made bold to say:

"I understand that your name is Wild Bill, and that you carry around in your clothes the reputation of being the boss fighter of the West."

"Where did you get your information?" asked Bill.

"Why, all the boys here declare that you have got away with every one who has tackled you yet. But I want to say that while I am in this country I am boss; that's my business, and I'm ready to demonstrate my claims."

"Well," replied Bill, drawing two pistols,

"I'll shoot a hole through each one of your ears, so that we'll all know you hereafter. The boss ought to carry his private mark."

"Hold, hold on," said the Professor, "I don't mean that I am a pistol fighter; I grant you the deserved reputation as the best pistol shot of the plains; but I can prove my claim as the best man with fists, and if you doubt my ability, just drop your pistols and shy your castor."

This speech so infuriated Bill that he took off his hat, and handing his pistols to the barkeeper, sailed into the ebullient Professor. An old cattle man who was present informs the writer that Bill gave the recalcitrant Professor an unmerciful trouncing.

During Bill's marshalships of Abilene and Hays City he made frequent visits to Ellsworth, midway between these two towns, to call on a saltatorial lady of the local honky-tonk who had inspired in him a tender regard. His attentiveness to her was resented by an Ellsworth bad man named Bill Thompson, who dared not confront Bill face to face. Wild Bill had no idea

that Thompson planned to kill him, and one day he dropped into a local restaurant and called for an oyster stew. While the waiter was returning with his order, Bill saw sudden fright exhibited on his face.

Turning quickly, the marshal discovered Thompson in the act of firing a pistol at him. Wild Bill slid out of his chair with such amazing celerity that the bullet missed him, hitting the dinner plate on the table. Before Thompson could fire again, Bill had drawn his own revolver and sent a bullet through his rival's brain.

His next exploit was an unfortunate one, though for its consequence he was later exonerated by General George A. Custer.

A short distance from Hays City was Fort Hays, at which there were upward of two thousand soldiers, many of whom were accustomed to visit the town, and, having filled themselves with redeye whisky, turn things upside down. Because of occasional arrests of some of the more turbulent, Bill was not a favourite with the soldiers.

On the afternoon of February 12, 1870, a body of soldiers came into Hays City, made frequent visits to Paddy Welch's bar, and then proceeded to become obstreperous. Wild Bill at once interfered. There are various versions of how the shooting began, but the most likely one is that Bill sought out the most disorderly of the soldiers, a big rangy sergeant, and told him he was under arrest.

"How much do you weigh, Mr. Long Hair?" the sergeant is said to have replied.

"I weigh," Bill replied," only one hundred and sixty-five pounds when I am in good humour, but my fighting size is a fraction more than a ton."

The sergeant answered that he wasn't going along with Bill, and offered to fight him to determine which was the better man. A dozen soldiers gathered about them and began shouting for a fight. For Wild Bill it was a case of either crawfish or fight, so he and the sergeant left their guns with Paddy Welch and proceeded to the street. Although Bill was much the lighter of

the two men he gave the sergeant a sound thrashing.

The other soldiers, seeing their comrade being thoroughly beaten, attacked Wild Bill with fists, knives, belt buckles, and heavy boots. Recognizing that Bill might be beaten to death, Paddy Welch ran into his saloon and succeeding in handing Bill his guns. Within seconds, three—some say four—soldiers lay dead on the ground. Bill did not escape uninjured, though he was able to walk away.

Knowing that his life would not be worth a straw in Hays City after this exploit, Bill, severely wounded, succeeded in reaching the ranch of a friend five miles distant. General Sheridan issued an order for Bill's arrest dead or alive. He lay secreted in his friend's cabin for several weeks until his wounds were sufficiently healed to enable him to get out of the neighbourhood in safety.

It was at this stage of his career that he made his first bow as a showman, the outcome of which will be told later.

Six months had intervened before Bill, then at Kansas City, learned that General Sheridan and the 7th U. S. Cavalry had left Hays City. Assured that it would now be safe for him to return to that town, where he hoped to resume his duties as marshal, he started back.

Desiring to meet some old friends he stopped off at Abilene. Here was a town in a far more urgent need of toning down and pacification than was Hays City. One scrivener has said that while Hays City was only comfortably full of the devil's emissaries, Abilene was running over and bursting out at the sides with the double-distilled essence of depravity. The town boasted less than one thousand residents, but murder ran riot, drunkenness was the rule, gambling a general pastime, fighting a recreation, and the mischief to pay generally the engrossing occupation. Yet the place was one of considerable commercial importance.

With the arrival of each vast herd of cattle came a reckless band of cowboys, all looking forward to enjoying a candescent carnival of fun

and frolic. With a gorgeous array of saloons, gambling dens, and dance halls it is little wonder that trouble aplenty should have been on tap.

Joseph C. McCoy, a cattleman from Illinois, had a contract with the Kansas Pacific by which he was paid a part of the receipts for shipments and had managed to work this up to very considerable proportions. Mr. McCoy, with Theodore C. Henry and others of the town's trustees, had attempted to bring about a state of law and order. Tom Smith, a highly capable town marshal, had been able to hold the unruly in check, but the end of peace and quiet came when he was murdered by gunmen. At this point Wild Bill dropped into Abilene, so sadly in need of a two-gun marshal. Mr. McCoy, then mayor, learning of the presence of the famous peace officer, sent for Bill.

There are various conflicting stories of what followed, but the main outlines of how the new marshal brought order out of chaos, after, of course, Boot Hill cemetery had been considerably augmented, are the same. Marshal Hickok had

only two peaceful days before riot broke loose.

In September the Dickinson County Fair was held at Abilene. It was a tumultuous success, for there were in the town a large number of cattlemen preparing to leave for their ranches. They did not care to see order established, and during the excitement of the county fair they planned the extinction of Wild Bill. The Hon. E. C. Little of Kansas City, Missouri, who was residing there at the time, asserts that a few of the boisterous cowboys drew lots as to who was to have the honour of taking Bill's scalp, and that a particularly desperate person named Phil Coe drew the short straw. Coe, who had come to Abilene in June, 1871, from Texas, was a gambler by profession and had been operating a faro bank in a back room of his own saloon, the Bull's Head, on Texas Street.

It seems that he had been ordered to move his game to the front part of the building, because of a well-founded suspicion that certain persons had been drugged and robbed in the Bull's Head. In that little back room Coe couldn't be watched.

Also, an honest faro box had been insisted upon, with the result that Coe had been cleaned out.

It was on the evening of the last day of the fair that Bill's destruction had been planned. Coe had arranged to return to Texas with Columbus Carrol and his outfit. With a great crowd of turbulent cowpunchers in town, each one well soaked with Valley Tan or Old Jordan, matters grew volcanic. Jacob Karatosky, a Jewish merchant of the town, was picked up and carried to a near-by saloon and "permitted" to set up the drinks. One man after another was treated in like manner. Finally Bill was found at his favourite restaurant and was informed that the merrymakers intended carrying him to the bar. He declined the honour, and, a little constrained by his reputation, the cowboys relinquished their purpose.

With conditions getting hotter and hotter, and amid a general tumult, Bill told the men who came after him to bear in mind there was an ordinance against firing pistols in the town's limits. By ten o'clock the streets and saloons

were seething with half-drunken cowboys. Everybody in the town who had any regard for his skin had by this time hunted cover.

Bill and his deputy, Jim Williams, were on the lookout for trouble at the Novelty, when suddenly a shot rang out in the direction of the Alamo, across the way. Bill ordered Williams to stay where he was and not to move on any account, saying that he would handle the situation alone. He swiftly entered the rear door of the crowded Alamo and brusquely enquired who was doing the shooting. His fighting blood was up—for he had been promised that there would be no shooting.

Coe was discovered in front of the Alamo, revolver in hand. Bill asked him if he had fired the shot and he replied in the affirmative. Then he fired again, the bullet grazing Bill's side. Bill whipped out his ivory-handled revolvers and fired both simultaneously. Coe was hit in the abdomen. This was unusual for Wild Bill, who customarily shot for the head.

Turning swiftly lest Coe's friends take up the

fight, Wild Bill saw a man running toward him with a pistol in each hand. Bill dropped this man with a single shot—but was horrified to discover that it was his friend Williams. He had disobeyed orders, and it had cost him his life.

The killing of Williams was a great sorrow in Bill's life. Mr. Little says he saw him the next day and "his face was pinched and white as a sheet over the death of his friend, the last man he ever killed."

With the shooting of Coe, Bill hunted up a clergyman in order that he might administer the last rites of the Church to the dying Texan. The remains were shipped back to Texas, accompanied by his sweetheart. An old resident of Abilene informs the writer that she was a Spanish girl named Lola; that she danced in the local theatre, and was "a magnolia for looks."

It should be remarked here that in another account, written by Buel, it is stated that Phil Coe and a friend named Jack Harvey had gone on a spree and began shooting up the town. In this story there is no reference to Coe's selection as

the one to annihilate Wild Bill. Bill, according to Buel, approached the gambler in a mild and friendly manner and tried to get Coe to give up his pistols and ordered him to surrender. With this, Coe immediately fired at Bill, but Jim Williams (Mr. Little calls him Mike Williams) had hold of his arm, and so the shot went wild. Bill now fired at Coe, but the shot struck Williams, who fell dead. Coe now pointed his pistol at Bill again, but Bill fired and the ball entered Coe's brain. Jack Harvey, who had been standing by, now fired at Bill, the ball passing through his hat. Bill now killed Harvey with a single shot. In the account by Mr. Little no mention is made of Harvey.

While history has it that this was the last time that Bill took a human life, there is a fable that achieved considerable circulation at the time, which the writer has not been able to verify. It is that a wealthy Texan bore Bill a grudge because of the fact that he had, while on a spree, been arrested and thrown into jail. He swore to have Bill's life. Arriving home he had offered

a large sum to several gun-toters to trek back to Abilene. The eight men arrived at Abilene, proceeded to get uproariously drunk, and while in this condition let it drop that they were there to perforate Wild Bill.

Bill had arranged to leave that night for Topeka and he caused a friend to inform the hired thugs that he was going there to purchase a new brace of pistols; that the ones he had were useless. Once aboard the train Bill learned that the eight men were in the car next to the baggage car. It was their scheme, it later developed, to catch Bill on a platform between two of the cars and then stab and throw him off the train. At ten o'clock, before this plan could be carried out, Bill decided to take the initiative. He walked to the car where the men sat, opened the door, and drew his two pistols.

"Now, you infernal scoundrels," he cried, "get out of this car immediately or I'll make buzzard food of your carcasses. Get off this train or I'll kill you as I would a pack of cowardly wolves. If it wasn't for disturbing the passengers I'd

kill you in this car, but I'm going to either make you jump off this train or I'll shoot you off."

He drove the men before him, and, reaching the platform they leaped off the train, which was moving at the rate of about thirty miles an hour. One of the men was killed and the others badly injured. The story further goes that the cattleman in far-off Texas spent the remainder of his days in mortal fear lest Wild Bill might seek him out and kill him.

Bill was marshal of Hays City again in 1871, but no mortuary event occurred. But about this date he is said to have been called to Wichita. While dining in a restaurant there, he was attacked by an unidentified man. The shot from the man's pistol cut a gash in Bill's scalp. The man fled, but learning that he had dashed away on horseback, Bill started after him. He overtook the assailant and brought him down with a shot from his revolver. This man, it was currently reported, was a cousin of Phil Coe. Another wholly improbable tale is that a brother of Coe made an effort to kill Bill at Cheyenne, and

that Bill killed him. There is, however, no record of Bill's having pistoled any one at that town. It is rather curious that Buffalo Bill should have been responsible for this latter tale.

It was at this period that Wild Bill first met Mrs. Lake, the circus proprietor, who later became his wife. In 1872, Bill grew weary of Hays, resigned his marshalship and moved to Kansas City. At that time the town had a population of thirty thousand and it was reputed to be a place that offered much in the way of entertainment, particularly gambling, in which Bill was vitally interested. Despite all the various opportunities for getting into trouble that confronted him, Bill lived peacefully there.

Speculation has been rife as to what might have been the outcome had two such streaks of Colt-toting lightning as John Wesley Hardin and Billy the Kid crossed Wild Bill's path. It isn't likely that anything would have happened so far as Billy was concerned, for he didn't begin his blood-drenched career till some time after Bill was dead. As to the incomparable son of shoot-

ing Texas, John Wesley Hardin, there is a story that he rode into Abilene while on a cattle trek from the Lone Star State, while Bill was master and marshal of that hamlet. It is reported that Bill took his pistols from him when he became obstreperous and that thereafter the two became friends.

Wesley Hardin himself tells quite a different story in his book recounting his own adventures. He declares that he came to Abilene in the spring of 1871 with a cattle-drive and found the lawless element eagerly awaiting his arrival. Ben Thompson in particular urged him to kill Wild Bill, but Hardin answered that he wasn't doing any one's fighting except his own—and asked Thompson why he didn't attend to Bill himself.

Soon after his arrival, however, Hardin started a spree and was in the street carousing when Wild Bill came up behind him, and in his customary quiet manner told the famous Texas gunman that he was under arrest, and to take off his guns. Hardin drew his revolvers and held them out butt foremost to Wild Bill—but when the mar-

shal reached for them Hardin performed the "road agent's spin" and in an instant the weapons were in Hardin's hands with their muzzles pointing at Bill's stomach. When he pretended to surrender and held out the revolvers Hardin had kept the forefinger of each hand hooked in the trigger-guard. A flip of his wrist spun the guns on his fingers into position to shoot.

According to Hardin's story he ordered Wild Bill to drop his revolver, and cursed him for a long-haired coward who would shoot a boy in the back. Wild Bill did not lose his nerve. Without any sign of excitement or fear he told Hardin that he had been misinformed, that he had not intended to kill him, and had no warrant to arrest him for crimes committed in Texas. He ended by inviting Hardin to have a drink.

A crowd of desperadoes had collected and were shouting to Hardin to kill Bill. Deputy marshals ran up, but Bill motioned them away, asking Hardin at the same time not to let the crowd kill him. Hardin yelled that he would kill any one who butted in. He then followed Bill into

the saloon, where Bill assured him he would not be arrested for his previous crimes and afforded him the coveted privilege of carrying his guns while in Abilene. The two famous pistoleers parted the best of friends, says Hardin.

Now, while Wild Bill's coolness and quiet demeanour at a moment when his life hung by a thread are characteristic, and although he used to make his arrests in just this way, the writer feels impelled to question Hardin's veracity. Wesley Hardin was inordinately vain of his prowess as a gunman; more, he was a killer. To have dropped Wild Bill, the most famous of border fighters, after the marshal had come up from behind and forced him to surrender would have been such a feat that Hardin's fame would have roared from the Rio Grande to the Dakotas. It would have been notoriety impossible to forego.

Hardin says that the road agent's spin, or double roll, was a new trick, with which Wild Bill was not familiar. This simply isn't so. It had been used by the California road-agents, and was so well known that no frontier peace officer,

above all one of Wild Bill's experience, would have allowed a desperado to hand over his guns holding them by the barrels. When a man was to be disarmed he was ordered to unbuckle his belt, letting his guns fall at his feet, and then forced to step back and away from them.

Wild Bill, moreover, had his own revolver in his hand. So much is shown by Hardin's statement that he ordered the marshal to drop it. Since Bill's revolvers had no triggers and were fired by lifting his thumb off the hammer, it seems probable that he could have fired while Hardin was reversing his guns, and that, even if Hardin had shot and killed him, the shock of the bullet would have discharged Bill's gun also with fatal results to his slayer. Wild Bill could have fired—and that he would have, under such conditions, every action in his life is evidence. He rarely started a fight, but as McCanles, Tutt, Conquering Bear, and Bill Thompson learned to their destruction, once battle was joined Wild Bill counted neither odds nor wounds.

There is no certain evidence of the truth of this

encounter, but one feels that the Abilene tradition that Wild Bill tamely disarmed Hardin is more probable. Had the incident actually happened as described in Hardin's account, it would have been trumpeted over the entire West—and when the discomfited Texas gunman was writing his book it is natural that he reversed the actual facts of his meeting with Wild Bill in a manner that would bolster his own reputation and self-esteem. Bill was dead when the book appeared, and in any case he was never a self-advertiser.

CHAPTER XI

WILD BILL STARTS A WILD WEST SHOW

THE original conception of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, as well as all other Wild West shows since that time, was undoubtedly born in the brain of Wild Bill in 1870. Hays City had become an uncongenial residence, so he sought new employment for his talents. He resolved to capitalize public interest in the American Indian and the much-talked-of buffalo chases and killings on the plains. For some reason or other he decided that Niagara Falls, with its army of summer visitors, was the proper place to try out such a star-spangled exhibition. It was necessary for this purpose to secure several buffaloes as well as wild Comanche Indians. As bison were more difficult to secure than Indians, he set out in May of that year to visit their feeding ground on the Republican River.

At the town of Culbertson, Nebraska, he obtained several assistants and journeyed with them to the buffalo ground. At Beaver Creek he discovered a large herd and set out to catch fine specimens.

Bill knew all about killing buffaloes, but catching them alive was something new. Accordingly he adopted a most ludicrous plan to carry this into effect. Aware that a drove of horses could be managed by tying their heads together, he argued that buffaloes might be managed in the same manner. He succeeded in getting astride one of the animals and tried to throw his lariat around the heads of others. No luck! Buffalo on the run keep their heads so low that it is difficult to lasso them. However, he finally got his lariat fastened around the horns of several excellent specimens.

The chase continued over several miles, his assistants following on horseback. With great difficulty, as one may well imagine, Bill and his men managed somehow to drive the catch back to the railroad station. They had first tried to

pull the buffaloes along with the lariats attached to their horns, but this proved an utter failure. Then they sought to drive them and that was worse. An attempt then was made to put hobbles on them. However, hobbling a wild buffalo proved a dangerous experiment. Two weeks of the most tedious effort was required to drive the six buffaloes to Ogallala, from which point they were shipped via the Union Pacific to Omaha.

It is a curious coincidence that it was in this same city, Omaha, that Buffalo Bill, fifteen years later, organized his famous Wild West Show.

Having his buffalo, Bill now went after his Comanche Indians. When he finally secured them he found that one had a trained cinnamon bear and another a large monkey.

Bill's outfit left Omaha for Niagara Falls on June 22, 1870. A lot on the Canadian shore was secured and what was thought to be a suitable enclosure erected. The buffalo chase was advertised for July 20th, and a great crowd gathered to witness the entertainment. Bill, however, had failed to take into account that it

would be necessary to build a high board fence around the enclosure, and so had to depend on the generosity of those who witnessed the entertainment for his recompense.

Buffalo Bill, when he organized his Wild West Show, encountered a similar difficulty. This he overcame by giving his show on county fair grounds. It was not until Nate Salisbury came along with a suitable tent and railroad equipment that Buffalo Bill's show became an assured success. All Wild West shows since that time have followed the plan then put into effect.

Wild Bill's buffaloes, which had been confined in cages, were turned loose upon arrival at Niagara Falls. The Indians, in full war paint, eagle feathers and all, set after them on their ponies. Other riders joined in the chase. To make the matter more interesting all the dogs in the neighbourhood joined in the enterprise. What with the yelling Indians and the barking dogs, the frightened buffalo dashed madly around the enclosure. Nearly five thousand people attended this exhibition, but it proved a

THREE SHOOTING STARS

From left to right: Wild Bill Hickok, Texas Jack Omohundro, and Buffalo Bill Cody.

CALAMITY JANE

financial loss because of the fact that Bill had provided an enclosure for the buffaloes but none for the populace. The contributions were not heavy. In point of fact, they were so slight that they left a considerable deficit.

But this wasn't the end of Bill's troubles for the day. While the buffalo chase was going on the bear had been left muzzled and tied to a tree. For the fun of the thing somebody removed the muzzle and released the bear, hoping doubtless to create a counter attraction. His hope was realized. In the crowd was an Italian selling sausages. The bear smelled the succulent edibles and made after the Italian with the intention of capturing bologna. He succeeded, for the Italian in his fright dropped his platter.

Bill was now in financial straits. It was only by the sale of the buffalo that he, together with the Indians, was able to return to Kansas City.

CHAPTER XII

TRAITS AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE

IN ALL the Wild Bill stories, true or imaginative, there are three points on which there is a general agreement, to wit: that he was very handsome, that his manners were pleasing, and, above all, that he was a thoroughly honest man. As to the latter qualification he gained and held the good opinion of all distinguished people with whom he associated. It cannot be urged too insistently that he was neither a bad man nor a killer in the sense that Billy the Kid was a taker of human life. Buffalo Bill, as well as others with whom he was long acquainted, loved the man with an almost idolatrous worship.

Both General George A. Custer and his wife, Elizabeth B. Custer, were particularly warm friends and admirers of Wild Bill, and each wrote glowing and enthusiastic descriptions of the

man and his character. Speaking of the various scouts in his command, "the most prominent man among them," wrote General Custer in "My Life on the Plains," "was Wild Bill, whose highly varied career was made the subject of an illustrated sketch in one of the popular monthly periodicals a few years ago. Wild Bill was a strange character, just the one which a novelist might gloat over. He was a plainsman in every sense of the word, yet unlike any other of his class.

"In person he was about six feet one in height, straight as the straightest of the warriors whose implacable foe he was; broad shoulders, well-formed chest and limbs and a face strikingly handsome; a sharp, clear blue eye, which stared you straight in the face when in conversation; a finely shaped nose inclined to be aquiline; a well-turned mouth with lips only partially concealed by a handsome moustache. His hair and complexion were those of the perfect blond. The former was worn in uncut ringlets falling carelessly over his powerfully formed shoulders.

Add to this figure a costume blending the immaculate neatness of the dandy with the extravagant taste and style of the frontiersman, and you have Wild Bill, then as now, the most famous scout on the plains.

"Whether on foot or on horseback he was one of the most perfect types of physical manhood I ever saw. Of his courage there could be no question. It had been brought to the test on too many occasions to admit of a doubt. His skill in the use of the rifle and pistol was unerring, while his deportment was exactly the opposite of what might be expected from a man of his surroundings. It was entirely free from all bluster or bravado. He seldom spoke of himself unless requested to do so. His conversation, strange to say, never bordered either on the vulgar or blasphemous. His influence among the frontiersmen was unbounded, his word was law, and many are the personal quarrels and disturbances which he had checked among his comrades by his simple announcement that 'this has gone far enough,' if need be followed by the ominous

warning when persisted in or renewed that the quarreller 'must settle it with me.'

"Wild Bill is anything but a quarrelsome man, yet no one but himself can enumerate the many conflicts in which he has been engaged, and which have almost invariably resulted in the death of his adversary. I have a personal knowledge of at least half-a-dozen men whom he has at various times killed, one of these being at the time a member of my command. Others have been severely wounded, yet he always escaped unhurt. On the plains every man openly carries his belt with its invariable appendages, knife and revolver, often two of the latter. Wild Bill always carried two handsome ivory-handled revolvers of the large size; he was never seen without them.

"Where this is the common custom, brawls or personal difficulties are seldom, if ever, settled by blows. The quarrel is not from a word to a blow, but from a word to the revolver, and he who can draw and fire first is the best man. No civil law reaches him; none is applied for. In

fact, there is no law recognized beyond the frontier but that of 'might makes right.' Should death result from the quarrel, as it usually does, no coroner's jury is impanelled to learn the cause of death, and the survivor is not arrested. But instead of these old-fashioned proceedings, a meeting of citizens takes place, the survivor is requested to be present when the circumstances of the homicide are inquired into, and the unfailing verdict of 'justifiable self-defence,' etc., is pronounced and the law stands vindicated.

"That justice is often deprived of a victim there is not a doubt. Yet in all of the many affairs of this kind in which Wild Bill has performed a part, and which have come to my knowledge, there is not a single instance in which the verdict of twelve fair-minded men would not be pronounced in his favour. That the even tenor of his way continued to be disturbed by little events of this description may be inferred from an item which has been floating lately through the columns of the press, and which states that 'the funeral of Jim Bludso, who was

killed the other day by Wild Bill, took place today.' It then adds: 'The funeral expenses were borne by Wild Bill.' What could be more thoughtful than this? Not only to send a fellow mortal out of the world, but to pay the expenses of the transit."

Mrs. Custer, widow of General Custer, who is residing in New York City at this writing, still retains a vivid recollection of Wild Bill. She referred to him recently as "a valuable scout and a modest man." In her vividly written recollections of frontier life, "Following the Guidon," Mrs. Custer gives a highly entertaining description, illustrating Wild Bill's modesty.

It appears that when General Custer and his family were stationed at Fort Hays they were occasionally telegraphed by excursionists, to meet them at the train. One of these parties from the East begged to see Wild Bill, sending the brakeman to ask him to come forth and show himself. It was their urgent desire to see the renowned scout. However, the more Wild Bill was pursued with messages the more he retired

from sight, hiding in the little room of one of the drinking saloons opposite the station.

General Custer, persuaded by some of the young ladies of the party, went after the hero of the hour and brought forth the modest pistoleer. Bill's face, according to Mrs. Custer, was flushed at the praise with which General Custer introduced him, and his fearless eyes were cast down in chagrin at the torture of being gazed at by the crowd. He went through the enforced introduction for General Custer's sake, but it was a relief when the engine whistle sounded and he was released. Mrs. Custer gives even a finer description of this son of the plains than did her husband.

"Physically, he was a delight to look upon," she writes. "Tall, lithe, and free in every motion, he rode and walked as if every muscle was perfection, and the careless swing of his body as he moved seemed perfectly in keeping with the man, the country, the time in which he lived. I do not recall anything finer in the way of physical perfection than Wild Bill when he swung himself lightly from his saddle, and with graceful,

swaying step, squarely set shoulders, and well-poised head, approached our tent for orders. He was rather fantastically clad, of course, but all that seemed perfectly in keeping with the time and place. He did not make an armoury of his waist, but carried two pistols.

"He wore top-boots, riding breeches, and a dark blue flannel shirt with scarlet set in the front. A loose neckerchief left his fine, firm throat free. I do not at all remember his features, but the frank, manly expression of his fearless eyes and his courteous manner gave one a feeling of confidence in his word and in his undaunted courage. He was 'the mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat.' While on duty carrying despatches, he let no temptation lure him into the company of the carousers who acknowledged him as their king. His word was law and gospel in that little town, for even where no laws are respected, the word and the will of one man, who is chosen leader, is often absolute.

"The impression left upon my mind by the

scouts of whom Wild Bill was chief, was of their extreme grace. Their muscles were like steel, but they might have been velvet, so smooth and flexible seemed every movement. Wild Bill reminded me of a thoroughbred horse. Uncertain as was his origin, he looked as if he had descended from a race who valued the body as a choice possession, and therefore gave it every care. He not only looked like a thoroughbred, but like a racer, for he seemed even in repose to give evidence of great capabilities of endurance—of fine 'staying powers,' in his own vernacular. The days of the Greeks are slowly returning to us when the human form will be so cared for that no development it is capable of will be neglected. Among the white aborigines of the plains, the frontiersmen, and scouts, there have long existed fine specimens of physical development that one seldom encounters among people who live an indoor life."

In General Custer's description he referred to Wild Bill as being the subject of an illustrated sketch in one of the popular monthly periodicals

a few years before. This referred to George Ward Nichols's article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, of February, 1867. All the descriptions of Wild Bill by people who saw him in the last years of his life agree as to the man's appearance. When Wild Bill was introduced to Mr. Nichols in 1865 the latter thought, as he looked at him, that he had "the handsomest physique I had ever seen. In its exquisite manly proportions it recalled the antique. It was a figure Ward would delight to model as a companion to his Indian."

"Wild Bill stood six feet and an inch in his bright yellow moccasins," Mr. Nichols then continued. "A deerskin shirt, or frock it might be called, hung jauntily over his shoulders and revealed a chest whose breadth and depth were remarkable. These lungs had had growth in some twenty years of the free air of the Rocky Mountains. His small, round waist was girthed by a belt which held two Colt's navy revolvers. His legs sloped gradually from the compact thigh to the feet, which were small, and turned inward

as he walked. There was a singular grace and dignity of carriage about that figure which would have called your attention, meet it where you would. The head which crowned it was now covered by a large sombrero, underneath which there shone out a quiet, manly face, so gentle in its expression as he greets you as utterly to belie the history of its owner, yet it is not a face to be trifled with. The lips, thin and sensitive, the jaw not too square, the cheek bones slightly prominent, a mass of fine dark hair falls below the neck to the shoulders. The eyes, now that you are in friendly intercourse, are as gentle as a woman's. In truth, the woman nature seems prominent throughout, and you would not believe that you were looking into eyes that have pointed the way to death to hundreds of men."

Attention has already been called to the fact that Henry M. Stanley had, while serving as special correspondent for the New York *Herald*, during his visit to the Far West, become an intimate acquaintance and great admirer of Wild Bill. In his "My Early Travels and Adven-

tures," he provides a picturesque description of Wild Bill who, in 1865, was one of General Winfield Scott Hancock's express riders.

"James Butler Hickok, commonly called Wild Bill," wrote Mr. Stanley, "is one of the finest examples of that peculiar class known as frontiersman, ranger, hunter, and Indian scout. He is now thirty-eight years old, and since he was thirteen the prairie has been his home. He stands six feet one inch in his moccasins, and is as handsome a specimen of a man as could be found. We were prepared, on hearing of Wild Bill's presence in the camp, to see a person who might prove to be a coarse and illiterate bully. We were agreeably disappointed, however. He was dressed in fancy shirt and leathern leggings. He held himself straight, and had broad, compact shoulders, was large-chested, with small waist, and well-formed muscular limbs. A fine, handsome face, free from blemish, a light moustache, a thin pointed nose, bluish-gray eyes, with a calm look, a magnificent forehead, hair parted from the centre of the

forehead and hanging down behind the ears in wavy, silken curls, made up the most picturesque figure.

"He is more inclined to be sociable than otherwise; is enthusiastic in his love for his country and Illinois, his native state; and is endowed with extraordinary power and agility, whose match in these respects it would be difficult to find. Having left his home and native state when young, he is a thorough child of the prairie and inured to fatigue. He has none of the swaggering gait or the barbaric jargon ascribed to the pioneer by the Beadle penny-a-liners. On the contrary, his language is as good as many a one who boasts 'college larning.' He seems naturally fitted to perform daring actions. He regards with the greatest contempt a man that could stoop low enough to perform a mean action. He is generous, even to extravagance."

As to the latter characteristic, Doc Peirce, who was in General Curtis's command with Bill, and who laid him out when he was assassinated,

gives this additional testimony in a recent talk with the writer.

"Wild Bill was very liberal with his money. I have seen him give a poor fellow a dollar bill to go and get a meal, and it was done so quietly that if you were not noticing closely you would not have discovered what he was up to. Bill was what might be called an unusually good-natured man. He talked very little, but to the point. Outside of Charlie Utter, the packer, with whom he came to Deadwood, his only intimate was California Joe [Joseph Milner] who was made famous by General Custer. Wild Bill and California Joe had scouted together with Custer, and were quite chummy. Bill never spoke of the past nor did any bragging. He was very much of a gentleman."

The Hon. E. C. Little of Kansas City, who as a youth had known Wild Bill at Abilene, gave a fine description of him in his article, "A Son of the Border," which appeared in *Everybody's Magazine* in June, 1901. "Not heavily built,"

wrote Mr. Little, "he was still very powerful, of the lithe and sinewy order. A Kansan stood before the Apollo Belvedere and declared that Wild Bill might have served as a model for the ancient statue. On horseback he was in the opinion of many the handsomest and most graceful man ever seen west of the Mississippi and he was hardly less so on foot. Straight as an arrow, easy, graceful, and nonchalant, he was an ideal specimen of physical manhood.

"His features were regular, his lips thin, his mouth sensitive. He wore a rather heavy moustache and long, heavy brown hair which reached to his shoulders and in which he evidently took considerable pride. His eye was frank, open, and of the kind sometimes called steel blue and sometimes steel gray. He dressed neatly, modestly, and after the fashion of the Western business man of that day, except for a broad-brimmed hat and fine calf-skin boots. His voice was gracious and pleasing, not peremptory nor defiant. Indeed, he was rather serious and dignified in address and a trifle cynical."

WILD BILL'S GRAVE AT DEADWOOD

It was found necessary to enclose the grave in a steel wire cage for the reason that souvenir hunters had chipped away a former monument. The grave to the right of Wild Bill's is that of Calamity Jane.

It will be noted that General Custer said he was a "perfect blond," while Nichols wrote that he had "dark hair." Buffalo Bill's memory seems to have been at fault as to the colour of his friend's hair, for at one time he said he was a "pronounced blond," and at another that it was "golden brown." In an extensive description of Wild Bill by "G. W. S." in the Los Angeles *Times* of February 4, 1906, he was said to have had "long shining curls of chestnut." Alfred Henry Lewis, quoting Bat Masterson, said his hair "in lighter moments fell in a blond cataract about his broad shoulders."

However, there is definite evidence that all those who wrote of him as being blond were mistaken. Gil Robinson is in possession of an ample lock of his hair, given to him by Leander Richardson, who cut it from Wild Bill's head the day he was killed, on August 2, 1876. This hair is light brown in colour. While Buffalo Bill, in calling his hair "golden brown" was nearer the truth, his general description of him is in exact accord with others, saying he was "as slim and

symmetrical as a piece of statuary. He had a wonderfully calm, self-reliant, and masterful face. He had a broad, firm mouth, eyes quiet and kindly. His walk was as proud and springy as an antelope's. He was, withal, as modest a fellow as ever lived—and never talked about his exploits."

But why did Wild Bill, like other plainsmen, allow his hair to grow to its full length and hang in waves over his shoulder? Alfred Henry Lewis, the author of the "Wolfville" tales, and who had himself spent many years on the border when a young man, one day at his favourite seat at Delmonico's discoursed on this subject. "The world does not praise long hair," said Mr. Lewis, "in the case of any man, but Mr. Hickok had much in his defence. He had let his hair grow long in years when the transaction of his business hopes and fears gave him much to do with Indians. The American savage possesses theories that yield neither to evidence nor argument. He believes that every pale-face who cuts short his hair does so in craven denial of a scalp to what-

ever enemy may rise victorious over him. Such cowards he condemns. On the guileless other hand, he holds that the long-haired man is a warrior bold, flaunting defiance with every toss of his mane. That long-haired one may rob and cheat and swindle and cuff and kick your savage; the latter will neither murmur nor lift a hand against him. For is not he who robs and cheats and swindles and cuffs and kicks a chief? And is not his flowing hair a franchise so to do? There lurks a dividend in hair for any one who traffics with your savage. Wherefore, in an hour of aboriginal commerce Mr. Hickok encourages a hirsute luxuriance in the name of trade. Later, he continued it for the sake of habit and old days."

CHAPTER XIII

THREE SHOOTING STARS

NED BUNTLINE (E. C. Z. Judson) lured Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack on to the stage in 1873. It was during the previous year that Buffalo Bill made his first visit to New York. A play was then being presented at the old Bowery Theatre entitled, "Buffalo Bill, the King of the Bordermen." Buffalo Bill was impersonated in this play by J. B. Studley. This actor, it appears, bore a striking resemblance to the famous scout.

Buffalo Bill attended the first performance and was prevailed upon to go on the stage and make a speech. He admits in his memoirs that he made a sad spectacle of himself. His fame at this time was so great that he was offered $500 per week to play the title rôle. This he

refused, saying, "You might as well make an actor out of a government mule."

However, the idea of making Buffalo Bill an actor captivated Ned Buntline. The name of the prospective play for Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack was "Scouts of the Prairie." Buntline met the two scouts in the fall of '73 in Chicago, where this Western drama was to have its première. Ned Buntline in his memoirs has this to say of his experience in introducing Buffalo Bill to the public:

"I shall never forget the time I had putting him on his feet as a showman. We had corresponded and I had agreed to run the show. We were to meet in Chicago. I got there Thursday morning and Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack arrived in the evening. They were to bring twenty Indian bucks for the show. Judge my consternation when they came without an Indian. What were we to do? The biggest theatre in Chicago was hired for the next Monday night at a heavy cost. We had no Indians and it was to be an Indian show. 'We must now have a play,'

I said. I went out and hired ten actors who were waiting around for something to do, and set Bill and Jack to making Indians of them. Then I went to writing a play. It was a blood-curdling and gory tragedy of the plains. Buffalo Bill was made the hero, but I was cast in a part where there was more talking to do, lest he might not be up to it. I wrote the play as rapidly as possible, handing the sheets to copyers as fast as finished, so that all could have their parts. We had three rehearsals: one on Friday and two on Saturday. My own part was not written at all. I merely had a cue at the end, and led up to it with any sort of talk I pleased.

"The eventful evening came. The curtain rose on an audience of perhaps three thousand. I had a rambling soliloquy about frontier life and my old pards, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, when, at the cue, in they stalked. The audience rose and howled a welcome to them. The cheer was prolonged and embarrassing. At last it subsided and the time came for Buffalo Bill to speak. He had forgotten his part and stood like a statue.

The prompter gave him the words. I told him to say something—anything. He was speechless! I said: 'Why, you've been off buffalo-hunting with Milligan, haven't you?' That woke him up. He looked at Milligan and his friends in a box, and told in plain language the story of his last buffalo hunt. Then we all got warmed up and the 'Scouts of the Prairie' went off in a lively manner. It was a highly successful show, financially, and has introduced many other similar Wild West combinations which the public seem to appreciate, judging from the vast assemblages drawn together to see the same."

Despite the absurdities of the première at Chicago, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack in "Scouts of the Prairie" met with flattering success. The piece, which had its première at Nixon's Auditorium, the present site of Hotel Sherman, played to big crowds everywhere and met with much favour when presented at Niblo's Garden in New York in the fall of '73. Fred E. Pond, in his life of Ned Buntline, says that the piece was entitled, "The Scouts of the Plains." J. W.

Buel, in his "Heroes of the Plains," gives the same title. However, the writer has before him a programme of the piece when it was presented at Niblo's Garden, New York, and it is entitled "Scouts of the Prairie." It may be that the word "Prairie" was substituted for the word "Plains" subsequent to the Chicago première.

The first season of "Scouts of the Prairie" being over, Buffalo Bill, taking into account Wild Bill's great reputation at the time, and being himself an astute showman, decided to lure his old friend before the footlights. This he was able to do only after considerable persuasion. The idea of being an actor never appealed to Wild Bill. However, as Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill had been close friends for many years, the latter was induced to don the sock and buskin, or, rather, moccasins.

A comparison of the programmes of the first and second years of "Scouts of the Prairie" would indicate that the piece had been completely rewritten. In the cast for the second

year, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack are the only characters that had appeared in the cast for the first year. Here follows the cast of the piece as presented in New York:

Buffalo Bill	W. F. Cody
Texas Jack	J. B. Omohundro
Wild Bill	J. B. Hickok
Pale Dover (Wife of Texas Jack)	Mlle. Morlacchi
Jim Daws (a renegade horse-thief)	Frank Mordaunt
Aunt Annie Carter	Miss Jennie Fisher
Ella	Miss Lizzie Safford
Lotta	Miss Eliza Hudson
Uncle Henry Carter, a friend of the Scouts	J. V. Arlington
Nick Blunder, with song and dance	Walter Fletcher
Tom Doggett, in cahoot with Daws	W. S. McEvoy
Ebenezer Longlank, gov't peace commissioner	A. Johnson
Tall Oak, a Kiowa, but on the square	W. A. Reid
Big Thunder, a Comanche Chief	B. Meredith
Bear Claw, Comanche Brave	H. Mainhall
Raven Feather	J. W. Buck

It will be seen that Ned Buntline had dropped out of the cast for the second season. The writer, unable to secure a criticism of Wild Bill

as an actor, appealed to his old friend, M. B. Leavitt, who was the manager of Buffalo Bill in a subsequent play, "Prairie Waif," and who saw Wild Bill act on a number of occasions, for his recollections of the performance. Mr. Leavitt writes from his home at Miami Beach, Florida, October 27, 1925:

"The play that I saw Wild Bill act out was 'Buffalo Bill; or, The Scouts of the Plains,' written by Ned Buntline," he records. "Wild Bill played one of the scouts and had only a few lines. Mostly action, but what he did was very creditable. The play was a sort of Wild West affair with all its trimmings thrown in: plenty of red fire and Indian fighting. The principals, outside of Cody, were Wild Bill and Texas Jack. Cody was the real thespian. The play was well written and a real thriller and fine success."

"As I recall," writes Herbert S. Renton, of New Rochelle, New York, October 22, 1925, "the formula of the piece was that of Montgomery Bird's 'Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay,' which Joe Proctor made so

famous—i. e., the travellers trapped and abused by Indians, from whose tender mercies they were rescued in the nick of time. Buntline played a part and I have a vivid remembrance of him tied to a stake ready for a barbecue, and that he remarked the Indians were drunk, which furnished a text for a temperance sermon which he delivered then and there. He did not mark the Indians he killed with a cross on the breast as the old Jibbenainosay did, but he scored them with his tongue."

J. W. Buel's criticism of the piece was, "The performance was lacking in many features essential to what is called 'smoothness,' and especially in the part taken by Wild Bill."

"Although he had a fine stage appearance," wrote Buffalo Bill in his memoirs, "and was a handsome fellow and possessed a good, strong voice, yet when he went upon the stage before an audience it was almost impossible for him to utter a word. He insisted that we were making a set of fools of ourselves and that we were the laughing-stock of the people.

"Wild Bill was continually playing tricks on the members of the company, and it was his especial delight to torment the supers. Quite frequently in our sham Indian battles he would run up to the Indians (supers) and putting his pistol close to their legs fire and burn them with the powder instead of shooting over their heads. This would make them dance and jump so that it was difficult to make them fall and die—although they were paid twenty-five cents each performance for the 'dying business.'

"We had two or three rehearsals together before Bill made his appearance and even then he was required to say only a few words. The first scene in which he was cast represented a camp fire, around which Wild Bill, Texas Jack, and myself were sitting telling stories. In order to carry out the scene so that it should be a faithful counterfeit of the reality, we had a whisky bottle filled with cold tea which we passed from one to the other at the conclusion of each story. When it came Bill's turn to relate an adventure I passed him the bottle, and taking

it in the way with which he was so familiar, he commenced draining the contents.

"I say commenced, because he stopped very suddenly and spurted the tea right out on the stage, at the same time saying in a voice loud enough for the audience to hear, 'You must think I'm the worst fool east of the Rockies, that I can't tell whisky from cold tea. This don't count and I can't tell a story under the temptation unless I get real whisky.'

"I tried to remonstrate with him, while the audience fairly shook down the galleries with their cheers. At first I was greatly mortified, but it did not take long to convince me that Wild Bill had unconsciously made a big hit. I therefore sent out for some whisky, which Bill drank, and then told his story with excellent effect."

Wild Bill's opening scene in this blood-curdling drama was a gorgeous uproar! A band of Indian warriors had stolen a pale-face maiden and run off with her. Then came Wild Bill to the rescue. On dashed Bill, dressed up in

buckskins and ample Stetson, and began blazing away. At every bark of the pistol there dropped a redskin, and so the house bellowed its delight. Bill then struck an heroic attitude, and clasped the terrified maiden to his breast.

"Fear not, fair maid; by heavens, you are safe at last with Wild Bill, who is ever ready to risk his life and die if need be in the defence of weak and helpless womanhood," he exclaimed.

There must have been something fascinatingly romantic about Wild Bill Hickok. Every man who knew him became his enthusiastic admirer. Everyone who had any dealings with him—except, of course, in the pistol line—was his staunch friend. Buffalo Bill delighted to talk hour upon hour of his pal, but the source of most of the printed matter attributed to Buffalo Bill relating to Wild Bill came from Major John Burke, otherwise the redoubtable showman, Arizona John.

The Major was the original advance agent of "The Scouts of the Plains," and he remained actively in the press department of Buffalo Bill's

Wild West Show during its career. It was his wont to discourse the evening through about Wild Bill, and he would grow more exuberant as the hours rolled on. The account of Bill's arrival in New York was, I fancy, a Major Burke concoction, prepared for publicity purposes; so, also, the incident of Bill shooting out the spotlight. The arrival story has been told in many forms, but as the writer recalls it as related by the Major it runs in this wise:

Buffalo Bill went ahead to organize the second season of "The Scouts of the Plains." He had arranged for Wild Bill to join him in New York. Among the other instructions he gave him was to take a cab at the depot and drive to the Brevoort House, and to give the cabman not a cent more than two dollars, for cabmen were nothing else but holdups. Finally Bill arrived at the hotel. He wore his usual cutaway coat, flowered vest, ruffled white shirt, pepper-and-salt trousers, a string tie, high-heeled boots, and broad-brimmed hat, his light brown mane flowing over his shoulders. Bill was then thirty-seven, a ro-

mantic and powerful figure of a man. But the New York jehu was not evidently impressed with either his appearance or his get-up. Bill handed the driver the two dollars as directed.

"My charge is five dollars," said the driver.

"Well, two dollars is all you are going to get," replied Bill.

Down came the cabman from his seat.

"Fork over three dollars more, you backwoods dude, or I'll tan your hide for you," he roared.

And with these pleasant remarks he made for Bill. Bill tore into the cabman with both fists and literally wiped the earth with him.

The Major used to tell this story with variations and enormous gusto. Another in the Major's repertoire was of Bill's timidity and what happened to the spotlight. He was so modest that he could not endure to have the spotlight thrown on him. Buffalo Bill and Jack Omohundro had no such qualms, and so he left it to them to do all the bowing before the footlights. One night a mischievous spotlight man followed Bill around the stage. Bill got as

mad as an election in a hornet's nest; and, the spotlight man persisting, he jerked out one of his pistols and let fly at the bull's eye of the spotlight, located in the gallery, and smashed it to pieces. Surely anybody would call this a finished and elegant piece of shooting.

The Major had the East wild with excitement over the doings of Wild Bill, with the result that when he ventured out on the street, crowds followed him whenever he appeared. He blocked the traffic wherever he went. One day an excited citizen seeing the crowd thought there was a fire and turned in an alarm. Then came the fire apparatus from all directions. What is more, and the main thing, Bill's picturesque appearance was no disappointment to those who had been informed of his prowess.

Unlike Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill did not enjoy the glare of the footlights or the public's applause. The writer recalls Major Burke saying, "The trouble with Bill as an actor was that he had a sense of humour and the public uproar over him he could not take seriously. It an-

noyed him. It made him tired. He couldn't endure it. The business seemed to him preposterous. He was sighing all the while for the freedom of the plains. With his good looks, striking figure, and excellent speaking voice, he would have made a fine actor; but the fact is he hated the business with a deep abomination."

Mrs. William F. Cody, in her reminiscences, says, "Wild Bill may have been wonderful with a revolver, but he was hardly meant for an actor." Mrs. Cody says that like Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, he had stage fright on his first performance and that he never got over it. Finally, standing in the wings one night talking to her, he said of Texas Jack and her husband, then on the stage, "Aren't they foolish?" He himself had just stuttered and stammered through his lines, and added: "What is the use of getting out there and making a show of yourself? I ain't going to do it." And that night, at Buffalo, Wild Bill doffed his buckskin suit and, resuming his usual dress, announced that he was through with being an actor.

It is said, with no specific verification, that Wild Bill went to New York City and while there was induced by a manager to come again before the public in a new play. After a few weeks this show went on the rocks, but no sooner had Bill left it than the manager reorganized and replaced Wild Bill with a cheaper actor. Wild Bill one day learned that this company was advertising him as the leading star. Informed that the company was to appear in Binghamton, New York, he went there to witness the performance. He was so highly incensed when the fictitious Wild Bill appeared that he leaped on the stage and thrashed him soundly.

CHAPTER XIV

A VISIT TO CHEYENNE

BEING naturally of a speculative nature Wild Bill was deeply stirred by the announcement of the discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874. It has been seen that the cause for his leaving the "Scouts of the Plains" was attributed to his propensity to burn the legs of the imitation Indians with blank cartridges. There is no way now of ascertaining the facts since most, if not all, of the actors in that drama have passed over the Great Divide; but, were the truth known, it is perhaps more likely that instead of tiring of the stage, Bill had caught the gold fever. That seems quite probable. It is only now and then that we catch up with any settled fact in his wanderings and performances. Various narratives of his goings and comings at this time have found their way

into print, but such of his old friends as are still alive have conflicting stories to tell. In this instance, it seems pretty much a matter of paying your money and taking your choice.

Bat Masterson, the erstwhile marshal of Dodge, with upward of thirty notches on his gun, gives one account. The merry and versatile Bat, called by the Great Spirit to his eternal home in 1921, told his life story to Alfred Henry Lewis, and the latter incorporated these facts in a picturesque volume entitled, "The Sunset Trail." In this book, Mr. Lewis asserts that Bat had journeyed to the Black Hills, had "struck it rich," and had sent for his old friend, Wild Bill, who had at one time saved Bat's life, to come and share in his prosperity. But that Bat ever was in the Black Hills is problematical. W. S. Hart, whose motion pictures have been for years a source of pleasure to the multitude, informs the writer that Bat had told him of his experiences in the Hills. On the other hand, my friend Ellis T. Peirce of Hot Springs, South Dakota, who was there during the gold fever,

and who was the amateur undertaker that took charge of Bill's remains after he was assassinated, tells me that he is quite certain Bat was not at Deadwood prior to the appearance of Bill.

It should be taken into account, however, that fifty years have passed since Bill's murder, and that Bat was a mere boy when the event occurred. Mr. Peirce admits that there is a faint chance that his memory may not rightly serve him. Then there is J. W. Buel. He makes no mention of Bat and tells quite a different story—only it is so vague and lacking in circumstance that there are ample spaces in it for Bat to have entered and played his part. The two fables agree, however, that after leaving Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack in the East, Bill went to Kansas City, and that it was from that city he made his way to Cheyenne.

The story told by Alfred Henry Lewis has a dash of romance in it that is totally absent in the Buel narration. According to Mr. Lewis, Bat had sent Bill two hundred dollars to pay his expenses to Cheyenne. But it appears that

while Wild Bill was in the "anæmic East" it had come to his ears that certain parties at Hays City and Abilene had made the statement that he had fled from those sinks of iniquity and sought the footlights for safety.

Now, to accuse Bill of being a coward and to assert that he had run away from any danger whatsoever was calculated to raise his ire to the boiling point. Consequently he decided to stop off at the two hamlets which he had pistoled into decency, and give any malcontents still lurking thereabouts a chance to burn powder. Any persons who were not satisfied might come to the train and demonstrate their displeasure with their hardware. It is reported that he sent the following telegram to the newspaper editors of Hays City and Abilene:

> "I shall pass through your prairie dog villages on Tuesday. I wear my hair long as usual."

Not only was this message printed in the largest fonts of type available in the printing

shops at either hamlet, but preparations were made to give the fullest possible details of the casualties. Meanwhile Bill carefully inspected his two ivory-handled pistols, his reason for this being that he "didn't want to be caught four-flushin' if some gents called my bluff."

Crowds were at the stations at both Hays City and Abilene. He was greeted with the utmost good-will by the best citizens and not a shot was fired. His honour was satisfied.

It may be stated that while in Kansas City his eyes had caused him considerable trouble. Many said this was occasioned by the glare of the footlights, while others contended that it was the natural consequence of excessive scanning of picture cards in his favourite game of poker.

Mr. Hart has been criticised for having in his motion picture, "Wild Bill Hickok," suggested that Bill was threatened with the loss of eye-sight. There is incontestable evidence that this was true. So it was that when Bill arrived at Cheyenne he was wearing goggles of smoked glass, and for some reason or other it was his

purpose to enter Cheyenne unobserved. With his flowing hair tucked under his hat, and with the goggles shielding his eyes, he was provided with an effective disguise. Whether this was intentional or not cannot be said. As Bill knew no fear, and as there was no cause for trouble, the writer ventures the belief that the hidden hair and the goggles were merely accidental. Anyway, they served to bring about what might well have proved a serious complication.

During the evening Bill decided to have a turn about the town and observe what was doing. At this period, it should be said, he carried a stout cane made of the end of a billiard cue. Of course, he also carried his guns. Though they were concealed, they nevertheless were within easy reach. Yet as he walked along the street he is reported as meditating:

"The next sport who gets a rise out of me will have to back me into a corner and prove conclusively that he is out to kill. Then, of course, I'll be obliged to take my usual measures."

It is more than probable that on this evening

it was not Bill's purpose to buck the game of faro. Buel says that he drifted into a faro bank which was run by a gambler named Boulder, while Mr. Masterson's report to Mr. Lewis was that he dropped into the Gold Room, which was presided over by a gentleman named Bowlby. The writer's Cheyenne informant says that Bowlby is the correct spelling, and that he was the man. As has been hinted in the foregoing pages, Bill was fond of taking a chance. The faro table stood at the far end of the Gold Room. If he had had any good resolutions on entering this pleasant resort, they vanished once his glance rested on the layout.

He had a hundred dollars in his pocket and was resolved to risk it. He bet fifty dollars on a card and lost. His money was swept off the board. Then he bet fifty more on the same card and won. The dealer counted out twenty-five dollars and passed it to Bill.

"How's that?" asked Bill.

"The limit's twenty-five," spoke up the dealer gruffly.

"The limit's twenty-five!" the lookout echoed.

"But," replied Bill, "you took fifty when I lost."

"Fifty goes if you lose!" retorted the dealer insolently, and the lookout with echoing coldness repeated, "It goes if you lose."

Well, here was Wild Bill being "put upon" again. He did remember his resolve of but a few minutes before to stay out of mischief, so he kept his guns in reserve; but he brought his heavy billiard cue into action.

Wild Bill—wild again—tapped the dealer and then the lookout. The two toppled over like a couple of ten pins. Bill then reached over and helped himself to the bank roll, and this accomplished he was pounced upon by the assembled bouncers. Then it was that the billiard cue came into action once more and he mowed a path for himself through the crowd to the wall.

"Let everybody fill his hand," shouted Wild Bill, as he drew his two ivory-handled revolvers.

Meanwhile Bill's goggles had fallen off, also his hat, which permitted his light brown hair to

fly to the breeze. If the reader will take the trouble to gaze at the portrait of Wild Bill appearing at the front of this book, he can readily fancy the picture he presented standing against the wall.

"It's Wild Bill!" somebody in the crowd yelled.

That was enough. It pays to advertise. The public, according to a voracious report, "began going through the doors and windows in blocks of five."

The next afternoon Cheyenne's esteemed marshal, accompanied by Mr. Bowlby, proprietor of the Gold Room, made a party call on Bill at his hotel. The marshal was highly incensed.

"You ought not to come ambuscadin' into camp that a-way," he said. "Your bashful entrance into town might have got a passel of Cheyenne people killed. It wasn't right, Mr. Hickok. Only it's you, I'd say it sort of bordered on the treacherous."

Then Mr. Bowlby timidly spoke up

"It ain't that I'm askin' it back, Mr. Hickok,

but I want to check up my game," he said. "Sech bein' my motive, would you-all mind informin' me kindly how big a wad you got outen that drawer?"

"Which I sure can't say," replied Bill. "I haven't counted it none as yet." Then in a friendly way he said, "Mr. Bowlby, I don't reckon that I ought to keep all that money; it's too much. I'd feel easier if you would let me split it with you."

"No objections in the least," replied Mr. Bowlby, politely.

"Which I should say as much!" exclaimed the marshal in enthusiastic admiration of Bill's liberality. "Thar's an offer that is good enough for a dog! An' now, gents," concluded the marshal, linking one arm into that of Bill and hooking Mr. Bowlby with the other, "let's go down to the Gold Room an' licker."

Is it any wonder that so famous and yet so courteous a man should have been immensely popular in Cheyenne, a town that Bill visited on several occasions? It was a little before this

time that Buffalo Bill and his wife had dropped into town. Mrs. Cody relates in her memoirs how it came about that she had then met Wild Bill for the first time. A dance was to be given in the dining room of the hotel where she and her husband were staying. Buffalo Bill came in and announced that they were to have a celebrated visitor at the dance that night, and when asked to reveal his identity, replied, "My old friend, Wild Bill Hickok."

"What! You mean that killer?" asked Mrs. Cody, amazed.

"Yes. He doesn't dance much, but he said he was going to dance with you if he broke his leg. And I want you to look your prettiest."

"For a man-killer? Why, Will! I would be afraid to death of him."

"Nonsense," replied Buffalo Bill. "Wait till you see him."

Finally at the dance, Buffalo Bill came forward "and a mild-appearing, somewhat sad-faced man bent low in a courtly bow." Instead of seeing a person resembling a fiend in human

form, Mrs. Cody told him she was glad to find him quite different from the man she had expected. "I was so happy," she wrote, "to find mildness where I had been led to believe there would be the most murderous of persons. Instinctively I looked about for revolvers. There was none, not even the slightest bulge at the hips of the Prince Albert coat he wore. I was happier than ever. We danced, and I must confess that we danced and danced again."

It is evident that Wild Bill's reputation of being a man-killer was not relished by him at this time. He had become self-conscious on the matter. It was an annoyance, and it irritated him. This is indicated by his dislike of the pseudonym Wild Bill, and the fact that he insisted on being addressed as Mr. Hickok. Such a fame as he possessed would have been as a salve to a vainglorious man; but not to him. He was shy, retiring, friendly—the last man to incite a quarrel—though he had an amazing proficiency in getting himself into shooting scrapes. But despite the number of notches

on his guns, there was not one there through his initial fault. It is little wonder that he disrelished being pointed at and followed about.

From Mrs. Annie D. Tallent, the first white woman to visit the Black Hills, we get a strikingly interesting view of Bill at this period. "One day during the summer of 1875," wrote Mrs. Tallent, "while I was walking along one of the principal streets of Cheyenne with a friend, there appeared sauntering in leisurely fashion toward us from the opposite direction a tall, straight, and rather heavily built individual in ordinary citizen's clothes, sans revolvers and knives; sans buckskin leggings and spurs, and sans everything that would betoken the real character of the man, save that he wore a broad-brimmed sombrero hat and a profusion of light brown hair hanging down over his shoulders. A nearer view betrayed the fact that he also wore a carefully cultivated moustache of a still lighter shade, which curled up saucily at each corner of his somewhat sinister-looking mouth, while on his chin grew a small hirsute tuft of the

same shade. Barring the two latter appendages, he might easily be taken for a Quaker minister. When within a few feet of us, he hesitated a moment as if undecided, then, stepping to one side, suddenly stopped, at the same time doffing his sombrero, and addressed me in good respectable Anglo-Saxon vernacular as follows:

"'Madame, I hope you will pardon my seeming boldness, but knowing that you have recently returned from the Black Hills, I take the liberty of asking a few questions in regard to the country, as I expect to go there myself soon. My name is Hickok.' I bowed low in acknowledgment of the supposed honour, but I must confess that his next announcement somewhat startled me.

"'I am called Wild Bill,' he continued, 'and you have, no doubt, heard of me—although,' he added, 'you have heard no good of me.'

"'Yes,' I candidly answered, 'I have often heard of Wild Bill, and his reputation is not at all credible to him. But,' I hastened to add, 'perhaps he is not so black as he is painted.'

"'Well, as to that,' he replied, 'I suppose I am called a red-handed murderer, which I deny. That I have killed men I admit, but never unless in absolute self-defence, or in the performance of an official duty. I never, in my life, took any mean advantage of an enemy. Yet, understand,' he added, 'I never allow a man to get the drop on me. But I may yet die with my boots on,' he said, his face softening a little. Was this a premonition of the tragic fate that awaited him?

"After making a few queries relative to the Black Hills, which were politely answered, Wild Bill, with a gracious bow that would have done credit to a Chesterfield, passed on down the street out of sight, and I never saw or heard more of him until one day in August, 1876, when the excited cry of 'Wild Bill is shot,' was carried along the main street of Deadwood."

It was at this time that Wild Bill met Mrs. Lake for the third time. How this came about will be told in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XV

ROMANCE AND MARRIAGE

WHILE Wild Bill was marshal of Hays City, in August, 1871, Lake's Circus came to town. It was then that Wild Bill first met Mrs. Agnes Lake, the famous equestrienne, who a few years later was to become his wife. It was rare for a circus to play so far in the West, and so the entire population for miles around came to see it.

The Lake Circus was an organization of considerable worth and reputation. It offered a grand street parade, a free balloon ascension, and a splendid free exhibition in front of the big top immediately preceding the main performance. And all these modern attractions were presented even before the mighty Barnum Circus had been organized by that clever young man, William C. Coup. It was with the Lake Circus

that the greatest of all circus operators, James A. Bailey, later to become the partner of P. T. Barnum, had his initial experience.

Of this circus Mrs. Lake was sole manager and owner. When her circus arrived in Hays City the town council, discovering the fuss that it was creating, decided to charge a license fee of fifty dollars, or permit no show. Wild Bill, who had already learned something of the history of Mrs. Lake, heard of the doings in the council and waxed mightily wroth. He stalked before that body of solons and delivered himself of the following address:

"I never made a speech in my life and I don't want to begin now, but I never went back on a woman and I'm going to give you some plain talk. You fellows live so far outside of civilization that your hearts have dried up like small potatoes left out in the sun, and as you can't read the papers, of course you don't know anything about what's going on east of the coyote's range.

"This circus that's advertised to show and furnish a little amusement for us heathens is

owned by a woman, one whose pluck catches my sympathy every time. Her husband, Bill Lake, one of the best clowns that ever sang a jolly song, was murdered down in Granby, Missouri, by a cowardly villain named Jake Killian, in August, 1869. The brave little widow, after burying her husband, had either to sell out or go on the road with the circus, and circumstances advised her to carry on with the show. My opinion is that any woman capable enough to run a circus is a darned sight bigger curiosity in these parts than the leather-heads of this village ever heard of, and when I see so much pluck shown by a little woman I just feel like throwing in and helping her.

"Now, if you fellows that run this town knew how to appreciate a good thing for the place, instead of charging Mrs. Lake for a license, you would vote an appropriation to pay her for coming out here to show us coyotes a first-class circus. If I've got any authority in Hays, Mrs. Lake ain't going to pay this town a cent of license for showing, and if any man attempts to stop the

show then just put it down that he's got me to fight. That's all I've got to say now, so drive on and we'll see who pays the fiddler."

Having listened to this oration, the unusually common council of four reconsidered their action, although in doing so they were of the opinion that they were losing a fine opportunity of supplying the town treasury with needed funds. Learning of this kindness on Bill's part, Mrs. Lake sent for him and warmly expressed her gratitude. He was introduced to all the important people in the organization and given an opportunity to inspect the paraphernalia of the circus. Bill then turned to Mrs. Lake.

"Well, now, all this is fine enough," he said, "but do you know the greatest curiosity about this canvas is yourself? I never saw a woman before that could run anything, except with a broom handle, and to find one managing a big circus like this is a bigger sight than California Joe when he was tackled by a panther down in the Washita. I used to think that women never amounted to much outside of being

mothers, and I guess I wouldn't give them that much credit if it hadn't happened that I had a mother myself and a good one, too. But I've changed my opinion now, for if I could hitch up with such a business girl as yourself, I'd go in search of the parson to-morrow."

Although Mrs. Lake was then in her forty-fifth year and eleven years older than himself, Bill fell violently in love with her. She discovered in Bill a strikingly handsome man. His dress was that of a gentleman, and she afterward admitted that he inspired in her feelings of affection and admiration. Yet nearly three years passed before they met again.

As Wild Bill's intuition divined, Mrs. Lake was a remarkable woman. Agnes Mersman was born in Alsatia in 1826, and while a young girl she became one of the most famous equestriennes and "queens of the high wire" that the American circus has known. When sixteen years of age she married William Lake, one of the famous clowns of his time. Besides her equestrienne performance, as well as her hair-

raising high-wire act, she is said to have been one of the first women in the world who ever entered a cage of wild animals.

For eleven years Mrs. Lake and her husband were the principal performers of the Spaulding and Rogers Circus. The Lakes were a happy couple and their daughter, Emma, became the celebrated equestrienne and later the wife of Gilbert S. Robinson, son of John Robinson. In 1860 Mr. Lake formed a partnership with John Robinson, the veteran circus man, and this show was known as the Robinson-Lake Circus. In 1866 Mr. Lake started a show of his own. At the conclusion of the first season of this circus, Mrs. Lake toured Europe, appearing in her own adaptation of Byron's "Mazeppa."

The Lake Circus continued on the road under the direction of William Lake until August, 1869, when at Granby, Missouri, he was killed by a local desperado named Jake Killian. By the death of her husband Mrs. Lake was left with the circus property on her hands, but she did not falter. After the funeral she summoned the

employees of the circus and addressed them as follows:

"Mr. Lake is dead and in the future I intend to run the Lake Circus. If any of you think me incapable, all I ask is that you give me two weeks' notice, when I shall try to fill your places. It's hard to get white men to work for you in this section of the country, but I am determined to keep the show on the road and I shall succeed."

Under her direction the Lake Circus travelled widely and enjoyed great prosperity. It was on one of these tours that she met Wild Bill at Hays City, as related. She died in 1907 at Jersey City in her eighty-first year.

During the three years which elapsed after their first meeting Wild Bill had himself gone into the "show business." In 1874 he was appearing with Texas Jack Omohundro and Buffalo Bill in "The Scouts of the Plains" at Rochester, New York. Mrs. Lake attended the performance and her presence was discovered by Wild Bill—who sought her out between the acts.

"Mrs. Lake, I don't know how to court, because I never did any of it in my life, but I've been thinking about you ever since we met in Hays City," he is reputed to have said in the course of their conversation. "Fact is, I'd be mighty glad to hitch up in harness with you, because I think we'd make a splendid team."

"I don't know how well we would suit each other, but at the present time my business is in such a condition that I couldn't think of marrying," Mrs. Lake replied.

"How soon do you suppose you could straighten out matters so that we could go to the parson together?" inquired Bill.

"Well, it will probably require two years to settle my affairs, but your proposition comes so suddenly and unexpectedly that I should have to think about it, for I don't know that it would be proper for me to marry again," she answered, indicating that she was not indifferent to the offer made her.

"I don't want to insist," responded Bill, "but at the same time you suit me to a dot, and I'd

give my eyes to marry you; therefore, I'll give you time to consider. I've got to go on the stage now to kill a few Indians to please this congregation, but when the show is out maybe I might see you over at the Osborne House."

After this meeting Bill did not see Mrs. Lake again until February, 1876. He had stopped at Cheyenne on his way to the Black Hills and Mrs. Lake happened to be in the city visiting the family of S. L. Moyer. Mrs. Moyer had been a famous single trapeze performer in both the Lake and the John Robinson circuses. Her professional name was Minnie Wells.

Bill inadvertently mentioned his admiration for Mrs. Lake to a friend, who to his astonishment told him that Mrs. Lake was in Cheyenne at that moment. He immediately went to the Moyer home. Seeing there was a tender regard between the couple, the Moyer family left them alone. Bill pressed his suit with the result that the wedding was arranged for the following day. On the afternoon of March 5, 1876, at the Moyer residence, James Butler Hickok was

wedded to Mrs. Agnes Lake, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. W. F. Warren, a Methodist minister. The couple left that night for Cincinnati, where they visited the home of Mrs. Lake's son-in-law, Gilbert S. Robinson, now a resident of Somers Point, New Jersey.

The gold discoveries in the Black Hills continued to create a great deal of excitement, and as Bill had already arranged to visit the new gold fields he left his wife in Cincinnati after a honeymoon of but two weeks to seek his fortune in the Northwest. It was the last time that Mrs. Hickok saw her husband.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CALAMITY JANE–WILD BILL MYTH

FROM what we know of Wild Bill, few women entered his life. All those we have mentioned, except his wife, are but shadowy figures in his career. In the account of the duel with Dave Tutt, Nichols gives a mere hint that a woman had provoked the embroilment, but upon investigation that intimation proved to be idle twaddle. It is stated on excellent authority, however, that Bill when a young man did marry a Choctaw belle after the Indian fashion. There is also the story of the young Sioux maiden, Mary Logan, which seems to be rather well authenticated. Yet according to the most reliable authority Mary and Bill were platonic sweethearts only. Finally there is Sarah Shull De Valed, who played her part in

Wild Bill's fight with the so-called "McCanles gang."

Yet in the decades which have elapsed since his death gossip has coupled his name with that of the notorious Calamity Jane. We say gossip, for it is unlikely that Bill ever met her before going to Deadwood in 1876, and the report that he was associated with the woman at any time seems to be mere moonshine. In the Deadwood *Times* of January 10, 1923, there appeared a letter from J. S. McClintock, in which he made the astonishing statement that "Hickok drifted, in the month of June, into Deadwood: accompanied by his consort, Calamity Jane."

This assertion appears to be wholly unwarranted. The writer has investigated carefully and has been unable to find the least justification for it. There is no man living who is able to give more reliable evidence on this point than the Black Hills pioneer, Ellis T. Peirce.

Mr. Peirce knew Bill during the Civil War and

was in Deadwood when he arrived there in 1876. Peirce, who has furnished the writer with much fresh and interesting information, was known in border days as Doc Peirce. Before entering the Union army as a scout he had completed a two-year course of medicine in Pennsylvania. This started him as "Doc" Peirce in the Black Hills, where physicians were a scarce commodity.

The gentle old fellow prescribed for all who were in need of help and medicine difficult to obtain. The writer is informed that "his chief remedy was whisky slings." Peirce also, when necessity came his way, acted as surgeon and undertaker. Finally, when regular surgeons came into the Hills, Doc Peirce, feeling that the only thing he could safely cut was hair, became a barber. About four years ago his health failed him, and now, unable to work, the generous friend of all who were in trouble lives on his pension. It was a fortunate thing for a lot of folks that so capable a hand as Doc Peirce's was ready and willing, without compensation, to alleviate their sufferings.

Requested to state his opinion in the matter of the alleged Wild Bill-Calamity Jane liaison, he asserts in a letter to the author dated October 16, 1925:

"By no means was Calamity Jane a paramour of Bill's. He was a married man and seemed to think much of his wife, and I never saw him associating with lewd women. I camped with Jane when we were scouts, and drunk or sober, she never made any talk to me about Bill, or even mentioned his name that I can remember. Now, any one who knew that old girl will tell you that if she had had a case on with Wild Bill it would have been her main topic of conversation. Jane was great for notoriety, and that is why she asked our Pioneer Society to plant her next to Bill so she also would be in the limelight."

Calamity Jane was in Deadwood when Bill was killed, but she did not go to Deadwood with him. He came accompanied by Charlie Utter, known as Colorado Charlie.

W. S. Hart in his motion picture "Wild Bill Hickok" took screen license with the man,

actually having Bill operate a faro bank at Dodge City, with the "beautiful Calamity Jane" as the lookout. Those unacquainted with the stormy career of Calamity Jane naturally supposed that here was depicted a truthful incident from the life of Wild Bill. But Mr. Hart, who has been a close student of Wild Bill's career, was not labouring under any such delusion.

Of course, it is possible that Bill may have met Calamity Jane while he was a scout with General Custer, but that he ever had anything in common with her is not disclosed. It is a matter of general interest in this connection that in her old age Calamity Jane emphatically denied that Bill had been her sweetheart. She was a great admirer of the man, she said, and that was all.

This "sweetheart" fiction is of recent origin and is based on a mere surmise, and on a false statement made years ago in an alleged life of Calamity Jane entitled "Jane of the Plain." The surmise arose from the fact that when the

so-called "Queen of the Plains" died in 1903, her last request was that she be buried beside Wild Bill in Mount Moriah Cemetery—and that her request was granted. The false statement appears in a little pink-covered leaflet and which Calamity sold as a means of self-support in her old age. In 1901 an enterprising woman of Buffalo, New York, lured Calamity Jane to the Pan-American Exposition. A small house was built on the electric route to Niagara Falls, in which Jane was established with nothing to do except sell her biography. Jane was allowed ten cents' commission on each book sold.

She thought at first this was a grand project, and to advertise the scheme she drove an eight-horse team through the streets of Buffalo. But Jane did not relish the idea of making a sideshow attraction of herself, and, furthermore, the profits to her proved almost nil. She finally gave up this scheme and arranged to appear on the Midway of the exposition, but that did not pan out very well, either.

Buffalo Bill finally came along with his show

and Calamity Jane prevailed on him to send her back home. She said at that time that she preferred the Wyoming poorhouse to the handsomest residence in Buffalo. In September, 1901, Calamity got back to Livingston, Montana.

"This is the country for me," she said to her friends with tears of joy welling in her eyes.

About this time she was interviewed at Livingston by Lewis R. Freeman, the famous explorer of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. Mr. Freeman was curious as to the truth of the story connecting her with Wild Bill, which appeared in "Jane of the Plain." In that pamphlet it is related that Wild Bill died on her shoulder, muttering brokenly, "My heart was yours from the first, oh, my love."

Asked by Mr. Freeman if the quotation were true, Calamity replied, "All blankety-blank lies!"

We shall presently see how Wild Bill died and the part Calamity Jane played in that gruesome drama.

It has been stated that "Calamity Jane's claim

to fame rests entirely on the fact that she was Wild Bill's sweetheart." This is a most erroneous declaration. In point of fact, she was quite a remarkable person. Hers is one of the most amazing lives among the men and women who lived through the romance of the plains, from the discovery of gold in California to the final subjugation of the Indians. Among the celebrities of that tense period Calamity Jane ranks as an astounding figure.

Her origin is in doubt. There are several stories of her life, but no two agree. There is a review of her life in the "Encyclopedia of South Dakota" which gives an account of her birth, but this fails to tally with the findings of others or with the accredited admissions of Calamity Jane herself. The Encyclopedia states that Calamity Jane (1860–1903) was "born at La Bonte's station, 120 miles west of Fort Laramie. In 1862, her father was killed and her mother severely wounded by the Sioux Indians. She was brought to Fort Laramie where she was adopted by Sergeant Bassett."

When Lewis R. Freeman met her a year before her death he asked her for a sketch of her life. She complied, and there is good reason to think that she told the truth, although at an earlier period she had given out for special reasons conflicting stories of her birth.

"My maiden name," said Calamity Jane, "was Martha Jane Cannary. I was born in Princeton, Missouri, May 1, 1848."

It will be noted that she here admits to being 12 years older than the age given in the Encyclopedia, which, undoubtedly, was an error. Jane certainly was more than 16 years of age at the time Wild Bill was killed, and on her tombstone is engraved, "Died August 1, 1903, aged 53 years."

Calamity Jane further informed Mr. Freeman that her family emigrated from Missouri to Virginia City, Montana, in 1865. She said her father died at Blackfoot in 1866, and her mother in Utah in 1868; after which she went to Fort Bridger.

This story is again in conflict with the one

in the Encyclopedia. Other investigators claim that she was born in Burlington, Iowa, in 1848, the daughter of a minister, and that her name was Canary, which she changed by adding an extra "n" to her patronymic. O. W. Coursey, the historian of the Black Hills of Mitchell, South Dakota, inclines to this view. Ellis T. Peirce gives the date of her birth as 1848, and claims that he had it from Calamity Jane shortly before she died.

There are various stories as to how Martha Jane Cannary happened to have the sobriquet of Calamity Jane bestowed upon her. It is claimed that Bill Nye, in his "Laramie Boomerang" was the first to use the cognomen—"because hard luck and Martha Cannary always went hand in hand." Calamity's own explanation is more plausible. It appears that Captain Egan, in command of the post in Goose Creek, Wyoming, was one day rescued from the Indians by Calamity Jane.

"I name you Calamity Jane, the Heroine of the Plains," he said in gratitude.

At least one historian of the West credits Calamity with having had upward of twelve husbands, but others have narrowed the list down to three. It appears that she had an illegitimate son, whom she sent to a foundling home in the East and never heard of again. She also had by one of her husbands, Clinton Burke, a daughter who is now alive and, according to a late account by the reliable O. W. Coursey, "a loving mother in a beautiful home of her own." In order to protect the name of her daughter, in later life Calamity Jane went by the name of Mrs. Burke.

During the greater part of the time she passed on the frontier she had no more use for skirts than an owl has for the Book of Common Prayer. She was a scout under General Custer, teamster, pony express rider, and all-around woman of the plains. She lived a hard and vicious life, yet she had a most kind and generous heart. When anybody was ill, it was Calamity who cared for the patient. Doane Robinson, secretary of the Department of

History, State of South Dakota, recently sent the writer the following summary of Calamity Jane's career:

"In appearance she was large and thick, she wore men's clothing, chewed tobacco, and was among the lowest of harlots, without a trace of refinement. Her temper was violent and when she went on a tantrum the population took to the woods. In the writings her good qualities have been magnified and her worst never disclosed. It was her boast that she never went to bed sober or with a penny in her pocket."

It is little wonder that those who knew both Wild Bill and this unfortunate woman have been reluctant to admit that he could have had any interest in her outside of a purely casual acquaintanceship.

The merest accident prevented Calamity Jane, and Wild Bill as well, from being with General Custer when his command was wiped out by Sitting Bull and his Indians on June 26, 1876. General Custer had wired for his old scout, Wild Bill, but the telegram went astray and so

he escaped death in the massacre. Early in 1876, Calamity was sent to General Custer with important messages from Captain Crook. She rode across the country, the weather being bitterly cold. This journey almost cost Jane her life, yet saved it, for otherwise she would have been with Custer in his last tragic battle on the Little Big Horn.

CHAPTER XVII

LAST DAYS

GOLD had been discovered in the Black Hills by Horatio Ross, one of Custer's scouts, in July, 1874. This find was reported to the War Department by General Custer, but as the Black Hills was included in the Sioux land, for which negotiations were then in progress, the report of the discovery was suppressed until June, 1875.

But the news leaked out and within six months of the discovery gold seekers were cradling for nuggets and dust in the streams of Black Hills gulches. As the Black Hills was on Sioux land, the Indians naturally resented the invasion. This, together with the Government's efforts to transfer them to a reservation, was the chief cause of the Sioux rebellion that resulted in the

annihilation of General Custer and his entire command on the Little Big Horn.

Deadwood was an outlaw town in 1874. As the land belonged to the Indians the Government could not recognize it as a settlement. It was not so recognized until June, 1877. But when Wild Bill arrived there it was a free-and-easy place, everybody carrying a bag of gold nuggets as well as a brace of pistols. Doc Peirce was there at the time and in a letter to the writer dated October 18, 1925, he gives a minute description of the town and its people.

"Deadwood," he wrote, "had only one narrow street, filled with stumps, boulders, lumber, and logs, with hundreds of men surging from saloon to saloon—so you had to get acquainted with a majority of them, and have a speaking acquaintance. Whenever a gunman came to the gulch the word was passed along as quickly as it would be at a ladies' sewing society.

"There was Johnny Bull, who killed Farmer Peals in Salt Lake; Billy Allen, gambler; Tom Hardwick, who with his party of prospectors

had killed Indians across the Canadian line, so that it took all the persuasive powers of James G. Blaine to keep the Canadian Government from hanging them. The Indians had stolen the boys' horses; that was what saved them. They killed sixty Indians and came back over the line with their stock, but this country had to surrender them. Joel Collins, the Texas cattleman, was a gunman; but he was killed just after the Big Spring robbery on the Union Pacific Railroad in the fall of '77.

"There was Laughing Sam, another gunman; and Jim Levy, the top-notcher of them all, except Wild Bill. Jim was killed down in New Mexico by Milligan, whose claim Jim had jumped. Tom Mulqueen got his afterward at Cheyenne. C. C. Clifton, one of Quantrel's old band in Missouri, was another bad hombre. He cashed in down in the Indian Territory; Boone May—in fact, all the three May brothers—were quick on the draw. Deadwood was then hog-wild; duels and gunfights in the streets, and

often one had to duck or fall flat on the ground to escape a shower of lead."

Wild Bill and Charlie Utter, otherwise Colorado Charlie, made their way to Deadwood, via Cheyenne, leaving the latter town on April 12th.

A story is told that, meeting the stagecoach a few miles out of Deadwood, Bill dismounted and took a seat alongside the driver. For the amusement of the passengers, as the coach rolled along, he took eight shots at squirrels. He neglected, however, to recharge his pistols, little thinking that road-agents were about. A band of these worthies, five in all, had learned that the incoming coach contained a considerable amount of currency in the strong box consigned to the Wells Fargo express agent. Suddenly Bill and the driver discovered five horsemen ahead of them, each rider heavily armed and wearing a mask. The men dismounted, and one of them grabbed the bridle of the leaders, crying out, "Up with your hands, all of you!"

Bill's hands went up—blazing. With four

rapid shots he dropped four of the outlaws. Necessity caused him to cease firing. The one man still on his feet, levelling a sawed-off shotgun at him, ordered him to get down off the coach. Bill recognized the voice; it was "Mickey" Rose, an ex-Cheyenne barkeeper.

"So it is you, is it, Mickey?" Bill replied, and, rising from his seat, he hurled one of his empty pistols at Mickey with such accuracy that the heavy weapon struck the head of the desperado, and smashed his skull.

"Well, I saved the Vigilantes a little job that time, all right," Bill remarked, surveying the bodies of his victims.

Is it necessary to add that for this incident, which outshines even the stories of the "McCanles massacre," the writer has been able to unearth no supporting evidence. If it had really happened both Young and Peirce would have referred to it—which they do not.

Harry Young, the barkeeper of Carl Mann's saloon, has furnished a picturesque discription of Wild Bill's arrival at Deadwood. We have

already seen that Young had been befriended by Wild Bill when he was a resident of Hays City.

"About the middle of June," wrote Young, "there arrived in Deadwood my old friend Wild Bill. Accompanying him was Charlie Utter, commonly known as Colorado Charlie. They were mounted, and a more picturesque sight could not be imagined than Wild Bill on horseback. This character had never been north of Cheyenne before this. Many in Deadwood knew him; many knew him only by reputation, particularly those who came from Montana. Among these Montana people were a good many men of note. I mean by that, gunmen, and the arrival of this character in town caused quite a commotion.

"They rode up to the saloon where I was working, both of them having known Carl Mann before. He being a great friend of Bill's, they naturally called on him first. They dismounted and walked into the saloon, great crowds following them, until the room was

packed. Mann cordially received them, asking them to make his saloon their headquarters, which they agreed to do. This meant money to Mann, as Bill would be a great drawing card. After the excitement of Bill's arrival had subsided a little, Bill looked at me a few moments, then said:

"Kid, here you are again, like the bad penny, but I am awfully glad to see you." And turning to Carl Mann, he remarked, 'I first met this kid in Hays City, Kansas, and wherever I go he seems to precede me, but he is a good boy and you can trust him. Take my word for that.'"

It has frequently been stated that Bill went to the hills merely as a gambler and with no idea of prospecting for gold. This is not true. In the Deadwood *Telegram* of November 13, 1922, the writer finds: "Wild Bill sought to accumulate gold by manipulating the picture cards rather than by digging in the earth for it."

Buel, however, makes the positive statement

that "Bill established himself in Deadwood to watch for an opportunity to make a profitable strike. He had located several claims." This would not indicate that his sole interest in the Black Hills was the picture cards of Deadwood, although when not otherwise occupied it is pretty certain that he spent his spare time playing his favourite game, poker. There are two letters written by Wild Bill at the time to his wife. One of these, dated July 19, 1876, disproves the theory that he had no interest in those parts as a miner. Here follows the letter, now in the possession of Gil Robinson, whose wife was Wild Bill's daughter-in-law, Emma, who is mentioned in the letter:

MY OWN DARLING WIFE AGNES:

I have but a few moments left before this letter starts. I never was as well in my life, but you would laugh to see me now—just got in from prospecting. Will go away again tomorrow. Will write again in the morning, but God knows when the letter will start. My

friend will take this to Cheyenne if he lives. I don't expect to hear from you, but it is all the same, I know my Agnes and only live to love her. Never mind, pet, we will have a home yet, then we will be so happy. I am almost sure I will do well here. The man is hurrying me. Good-bye, dear wife. Love to Emma.

J. B. Hickok.

Had it not been for Bill's courage he might very well have met with a tragic fate even earlier than he did. There were a number of Montana gun fighters in Deadwood at the time of his arrival. Bill was envied by these men, for it appears that his reputation was much the same as that of a prize fighter who has sent all his opponents down to defeat. He was the champion. Gun fighters at that time aspired to kill any one of their number who had a superior record, and thus lay claim to the championship. One night in the Montana saloon, six gun fighters, envious of Bill's prowess, were criticising him, and openly threatening that they would get rid

of him. A friend of Bill's overheard this talk and reported it to him. Bill immediately put his revolvers in order, and going straight to the Montana saloon, walked up to the crowd.

"I understand that you cheap, would-be gun fighters from Montana have been making remarks about me," he said. "I want you to understand unless they are stopped there will shortly be a number of cheap funerals in Deadwood. I have come to this town, not to court notoriety, but to live in peace, and do not propose to stand for your insults."

Whereupon Bill ordered the six men to stand against the wall and deliver up their guns. This they did in a sheepish manner. He then backed out of the saloon, and it was the last he heard of the Montana crowd aspiring to the championship.

That Bill was far from being a brumous individual; that he was, on the contrary, of a mercurial turn of mind, we gather from various sources. The only allusion that he ever made to the amazing McCanles fight stories then

current—so far as we have been able to ascertain —comes from his old friend Fred E. Sutton, now residing at Kansas City. Mr. Sutton asked him how many men he had killed in that battle.

"Why, Fred, I slew an entire regiment with one hand tied behind my back," Bill replied.

Thanks to the literary barkeeper, Harry Young, it is disclosed that Bill, in his lighter moods, was considerable of a wag. Much has been made of his taciturnity; but Young, across the bar, found Bill to be a merry fellow, discoursing diverting tales. He considered this one of his prize stories.

"'Some years ago in the Indian territory,' said Bill, 'I was scouting for General Custer, and getting up into southwestern Kansas, which was a new country to me at that time. I was riding quite a distance ahead of the command, when I saw an opening about two feet wide which seemed to run into a bluff. I thought I would explore this. On closer examination I found this passageway about ten feet long. Passing through it I discovered that it led to a large open space

of considerable area and was surrounded on all sides by a wall.

"'I remarked to myself, what a great protection from Indians this would be if one were hard pressed—the entrance being so narrow one could secrete himself on the inside and kill any number of them, since they could only enter one at a time. I was armed with a six-shooter and also a large knife. The thought had hardly passed through my brain, when in looking at the entrance I saw an Indian approaching. Knowing he was hostile, I shot him. Another came; I also shot him.

"'They kept coming one by one until I had discharged the six shots that my gun contained. In those days we used the powder and ball six-shooters, with caps on the nipples. Not having any extra ammunition with me, I was unable to reload. More Indians kept coming. I then drew my knife from my belt and backed up against the wall at the farther end, while in the meantime the open space became crowded with Indians.'

"Here Bill stopped telling the story. One of the many listeners, however, asked him what he did then. Bill hesitated a moment, Young reports.

"'What could I do?' Bill replied. 'There were many of them, well armed, and I had only my knife.'

"'Well, then,' questioned his interrogator, 'what did they do?'

"Bill gave a long sigh.

"'By God, they killed me, boys!' he said.

"For a few moments they did not seem to see the joke, but soon began laughing," Young writes. "One of them asked the crowd up to the bar to drink, and Bill whispered to me, 'Kid, that's one time I had to die.'

"'Why didn't you unfold your wings and fly?' I replied.

"He said the next time he told that story he would escape in that manner."

At another time Bill told the following story:

He was riding along one day in the mountains in Colorado and was about to cross an open

space when he heard a loud noise behind him. Looking back, he saw a great snake about fifty feet long, with a head resembling a man's—having the nose, mouth, and chin of a man, also a pair of legs, which looked very much like a man's arms; its breast and stomach both resembling those of a man also. It was a vicious-looking reptile. His horse, scenting it, became frightened and ran away with him. The faster the horse ran, the closer this reptile approached, convincing Bill that it would soon catch up with him. Turning in his saddle, he shot the reptile dead. Quieting his horse, he dismounted, and with his gun in hand ready for immediate use he walked back to examine the reptile, and found that it really had a stomach like a human being. He could not carry it with him to camp, so cut the head off; then opening the stomach, found in there eight hundred and seventy-five dollars' worth of gold dust. This was a gold-eating snake. Now he was in a quandary, not daring to take the head back with him as he might be compelled to give up the gold, so he decided to

cover it up with earth at a near-by bluff. Going to the nearest town, he displayed this gold dust, not telling where he had procured it, but the people then began prospecting for gold in Colorado and discovered it in paying quantities. And this gold-eating snake should have the credit for the discovery.

"This is the first time I have ever told the secret," added Bill.

"I thought the listeners would explode with laughter, which pleased Bill very much," Young comments.

To abandon these digressions from our history, Wild Bill was now living in peace with everyone in Deadwood, as he had travelled far from his former conflicts with the bad men of Hays and Abilene. O. W. Coursey, the historian of the Black Hills, now a resident of Mitchell, South Dakota, has made a searching investigation of those wild times. He learned that Bill had a premonition when he entered Deadwood Gulch that his end was near. When the party reached the top of the upland divide (Break Neck Hill)

and looked over into Deadwood Gulch for the first time, he said to Colorado Charlie Utter, "I have a hunch that I am in my last camp and will never leave this gulch alive."

"Quit dreaming," retorted Utter.

"No, I am not dreaming," replied Wild Bill. "Something tells me that my time is up, but where it is coming from I do not know, as I cannot think of one living enemy who would wish to kill me."

On the evening before he was killed he was standing up leaning against the jamb of the door to the building in which he was to be assassinated the next day, looking downcast.

"Bill, why are you looking so dumpy tonight?" Tom Dosier asked him.

"Tom, I have a presentiment that my time is up and that I am soon going to be killed," Bill replied.

"Oh, pooh, pooh!" said Tom. "Don't get to seeing things; you're all right."

A letter written by Wild Bill to his wife on that same evening lends reality to this legend:

AGNES DARLING:

If such should be we never meet again, while firing my last shot, I will gently breathe the name of my wife—Agnes—and with wishes even for my enemies I will make the plunge and try to swim to the other shore.

J. B. HICKOK.

On the following afternoon, Wednesday, August 2, 1876, he was engaged in a game of poker in a saloon owned by Carl Mann and Jerry Lewis.

There is some diversity of opinion as to the name of this place. O. W. Coursey says it was No. 6; Harry Young, the barkeeper, in his "Hard Knocks," says it was No. 66; while Brown and Willard, in "Black Hill Trails," give it as No. 10.

Those sitting at the table beside Wild Bill were Carl Mann, Charles Rich, and Captain Massey, the latter a former Missouri River pilot. As the game progressed the quartet were joking and laughing.

For the first time known, Wild Bill was sitting with his back to a door. While he was facing the

front door, a rear door was standing open. Charlie Rich had taken Bill's seat next to the wall, just to plague him, and kept it, though several times Bill asked Charlie to exchange places. Rich said afterward that he was the cause of Bill's murder.

Jack McCall, the assassin, entered the saloon in a careless manner, not giving the least hint of his cowardly purpose. He walked up to the bar, at which Harry Young was officiating, and then sauntered around to a point a few yards behind Wild Bill. He then swiftly drew a 45-calibre Colt and fired. The bullet passed through Bill's head, issued beneath his right cheek bone and before it had spent its course, pierced Captain Massey's left arm. The time was 4:10 P. M.

In his letter to the writer Mr. Peirce gives several details that have not heretofore been revealed. Doc Peirce was the impromptu undertaker who took charge of the remains and looked after the details of the burial:

"Now, in regard to the position of Bill's body,"

writes Mr. Peirce, "when they unlocked the door for me to get his body, he was lying on his side, with his knees drawn up just as he slid off his stool. We had no chairs in those days—and his fingers were still crimped from holding his poker hand. Charlie Rich, who sat beside him, said he never saw a muscle move. Bill's hand read 'aces and eights'—two pair, and since that day aces and eights have been known as 'the dead man's hand' in the Western country. It seemed like fate, Bill's taking off. Of the murderer's big Colt's-45 six-gun, every chamber loaded, the cartridge that killed Bill was the only one that would fire. What would have been McCall's chances if he had snapped one of the other cartridges when he sneaked up and held his gun to Bill's head? He would now be known as No. 37 on the file list of Mr. Hickok."

It has been stated that Bill occupied a cabin which stood in a little copse near the spot where the Burlington depot now stands in the city of Deadwood; but Doc Peirce states that Bill was living in a tent, a wagon cover stretched over a

pole. Colorado Charlie Utter was his tent mate. It was to this tent that the body was taken by Doc Peirce to prepare it for burial.

In a former statement he said: "When Bill was shot through the head he bled out quickly, and when he was laid out he looked like a wax figure. I have seen many dead men on the field of battle and in civil life, but Wild Bill was the prettiest corpse I have ever seen. His long moustache was attractive, even in death, and his long tapering fingers looked like marble."

The following funeral notice was printed and distributed among the miners of the district:

FUNERAL NOTICE

Died in Deadwood, Black Hills, August 2, 1876, from the effects of a pistol shot, J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill) formerly of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Funeral services will be held at Charlie Utter's camp on Thursday afternoon, August 3d, 1876, at three o'clock P. M.

All are respectfully invited to attend.

The body of Wild Bill was enclosed in a coffin made from rough boards. Mr. Peirce had deftly closed the wound in his cheek so that it was scarcely noticeable. Bill's countenance was one of perfect peace, while his long beautiful light brown hair lay parted evenly across his forehead and fell gracefully down to his broad shoulders. According to an eye witness, an expression of calm contentment crowned his features; the lips were slightly parted as if still smiling at the last joke that was passed around the table when the fatal shot was fired. Colorado Charlie had placed beside him in the coffin the Sharps rifle that Bill had carried for many years.

A grave had been dug at Ingleside, then a romantic spot on the mountain slope. A clergyman read the funeral service and on a large stump at the head of the grave was rudely carved the following inscription:

> A brave man, the victim of an assassin,
> J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill) age 39 years;
> murdered by Jack McCall, Aug. 2, 1876.

Captain Jack Crawford, the poet scout, and one of Wild Bill's most intimate friends, commemorated his burial in verse. This poem is dedicated to Colorado Charlie Utter:

BURIAL OF WILD BILL

Under the sod in the prairie land
We have laid him down to rest,
With many a tear from the sad, rough throng,
And the friends he loved the best;
And many a heartfelt sigh was heard
As over the sward we trod,
And many an eye was filled with tears
As we covered him with the sod.

Under the sod in the prairie land
We have laid the good and true—
An honest heart and a noble scout
Has bade us a last adieu.
No more his silvery voice will ring,
His spirit has gone to God;
Around his faults let charity cling,
While we cover him with the sod.

Under the sod in the land of gold
We have laid the fearless Bill;
We called him Wild, yet a little child
Could bend his iron will.
With generous heart he freely gave
To the poorly clad, unshod—
Think of it, pards—of his noble traits—
While you cover him with the sod.

Under the sod in Deadwood Gulch
You have laid his last remains;
No more his manly form will hail
The Red Man on the plains.
And, Charlie, may Heaven bless you!
You gave him a "bully good send";
Bill was a friend to you, pard,
And you were his last, best friend.

You buried him 'neath the old pine tree,
In that little world of ours,
His trusty rifle by his side—
His grave all strewn with flowers;

His manly form in sweet repose,
That lovely silken hair—
I tell you, pard, it was a sight,
That face so white and fair!

The pall-bearers were William Hillman, John Oyster, Charlie Rich, Jerry Lewis, Charles Young, and Tom Dosier.

In a letter written by Wild Bill's sister Lydia, in 1896, she gives a pathetic picture of the arrival of the news of her brother's death at Troy Grove, Illinois.

"I remember the day the paper came," she wrote, "with the news of Bill's murder. Mother had been a sufferer from inflammatory rheumatism for two years before that and had not taken a step for eighteen months. My sister was standing at the gate when a neighbour came by and brought the Chicago paper, giving an account of Bill's death. He handed it to my sister. She took it and saw the headlines, but did not read all of it. She folded it up and hurried into the house, hiding the paper in the kitchen behind

the mirror on the shelf. Then composing herself she went in where Mother was sitting.

"'Mother,' she said, 'I am going over to the store a minute and will be right back.'

"She put on her bonnet and ran to the little store about two hundred yards away to tell one of my brothers. All came back to the house together. When they entered the sitting room, there sat Mother, the newspaper lying at her side, slowly rocking back and forth, while the blood from a hemorrhage of the lungs dyed the front part of her dress.

"'I saw you get the paper, Lydia,' she said, 'and when you did not bring it in, I went and got it.'

"She never fully recovered from the blow, and she died two years later, still mourning Bill's terrible death."

Within three years Deadwood had grown so rapidly that it was found necessary to remove the bodies in the old graveyard where Wild Bill lay. On August 3, 1879, Charlie Utter and

Lewis Shoenfield, old friends of Bill's, arranged for the removal of the remains to Mount Moriah cemetery. Upon removing the coffin lid, it was found that few changes had taken place in the features. In short, Wild Bill lay after three years as if he had been merely asleep. The same smile lingered on his lips, as if the sleeper was in a pleasant dream.

An account of the exhumation of the remains was published in the Deadwood *Telegram* of November 13, 1922, in which it was stated that those who assisted the undertaker "were astounded to find that by some natural embalming process of the soil, accomplished by water which had percolated through the coffin, the body of Wild Bill had been so well embalmed as to preserve even the outlines of his features and the lines of the manifold pleatings of the dress shirt which he wore. This preservation of the body gave rise to the report that it had been petrified, but Mr. McClintock states that from his examination he would call it an embalming, rather than

a petrification, by the deposition of minerals in the tissues of the body."

This lot and grave had been prepared by Colorado Charlie Utter, who had given the remains their second burial. A marble headstone was placed at the head of the grave inscribed as follows:

WILD BILL
J. B. HICKOK
KILLED BY THE ASSASSIN
JACK McCALL
DEADWOOD CITY
BLACK HILLS
AUGUST 2, 1876
PARD, WE WILL MEET AGAIN IN THE HAPPY
HUNTING GROUNDS TO PART NO MORE.
GOODBYE
COLORADO CHARLIE.
C. H. UTTER.

So great had Wild Bill's fame become that in the ten succeeding years visitors to Mount Moriah cemetery had chipped off pieces of the headstone as souvenirs until little or nothing was left of it. When a new headstone and full-length statue was arranged for, it was decided that in order to save the tomb from desecration

by vandals it should be surrounded by a steel cage. This new monument and statue was erected in 1892. It was carved by James H. Riordan, a sculptor of New York, who was visiting in that locality.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF JACK MCCALL

WHO was Jack McCall and why did he kill Wild Bill Hickok?

The reader who has perused these pages thus far must have overcome surprise at anything of a mortuary nature that happened in those blood-drenched days. We have seen that on the evening before his murder Wild Bill had a premonition of his doom at the hands of an assassin. Yet little did he suspect, evidently, that the creature destined to strike him down was a man not yet twenty-five years of age, and one with whom he had engaged in a friendly game of cards earlier on that fatal afternoon. Had his attention been directed to McCall, or had he the least suspicion of his murderous design, it is safe to conclude that he would not have been

slain, and that his deadly pistol would have had one more notch scratched on its ivory handle.

Wild Bill died a victim of his own reputation. Deadwood in 1876 was a prey to lawlessness. A succession of gunmen had been attracted thither, as they always are to points where there are a flow of gold and laxity of law enforcement. Things had reached the stage in July of that year when the better class of residents had decided, by all means at their command, to put an end to the existing bloody state of affairs.

The citizens sought to preserve order without resorting to lynch law, and after the Hinch murder trial, which took place upon a pile of logs in the middle of the street, the question of choosing a marshal was considered. As Wild Bill had arrived in June and his official acts at Abilene and at Hays City were known and appreciated, a suggestion was made to offer him a large salary and have him duplicate his Kansas record. Tim Brady and Johnny Varnes, two of the undesirables, got Jack McCall drunk and then told him that Bill was to be marshal of the town and

that all gun-play would stop. It was said at the time, and never denied, that they told Jack that the boys could not afford to have Wild Bill Hickok created marshal and that they would give him two hundred dollars if he would slip across the street and shoot Bill. They gave him twenty-five dollars in dust on account and promised to pay him the remaining one hundred and seventy-five dollars when the bloody work had been performed.

Doc Peirce has given the writer a minute description of the assassin. He says that Jack McCall was known as Broken Nose Jack and that he was "the most repulsive-looking man I have ever met. He was cross-eyed and his nose had been broken by being struck with a six-shooter. He told me he was raised in Louisville, Kentucky, but came to the plains when a youth and joined a band of buffalo hunters down on the Republican River in Nebraska. He was a queer specimen of the genus homo. I have seen him do some generous deeds while sober, but he was a demon when drinking. I camped with him a

short time and studied him well. He had a dual personality."

After McCall shot Wild Bill he ran out of the saloon, snapping his pistol at Harry Young, the barkeeper, as he fled. We have already seen that the other charges in McCall's pistol were dead, and so Harry Young lived to write his reminiscences under the title, "Hard Knocks." McCall ran for some distance up the main street and attempted to hide in a meat market owned by Jacob Shoudy. Some reports have it that he was seized by Isaac Brown; others say that it was Calamity Jane who found him hiding behind a quarter of beef and captured him. McCall, after being taken, was confined in an old log cabin and kept under heavy guard.

At McDaniel's Deadwood Theatre that evening a meeting of citizens was held at which preparations for the trial were made. There was no legal court at Deadwood, and in the absence of duly qualified officers of the law it was decided to conduct the trial according to the forms of self-constituted tribunals outside the

pale of established legal jurisdiction. This gathering, to the number of one hundred, was presided over by W. L. Kuydendall, who, having stated the object of the meeting, was chosen as judge.

The proceedings were then adjourned until nine o'clock on the following morning. Colonel May was chosen to conduct the prosecution. A. B. Chapline was selected by the prisoner to defend him, but Mr. Chapline being too ill to go on with the case, Judge Miller was named in his stead. Arrangements were next made for obtaining a trial by jury. A committee appointed by the judge selected thirty-three residents, and from the names thus submitted a trial jury of twelve men was to be drawn. A recess was then taken until two o'clock in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, there were insistent demands for the lynching of McCall. Yet those who were for abiding by the findings of the jury held sway. The thirty-three names submitted by the committee were written on slips of paper and placed in a hat. With the drawing of each name, the

person responding thereto was examined as to his qualifications to serve as an unprejudiced juror in the case.

J. J. Bump, Edward Burke, L. D. Bookaw, J. F. Cooper, S. S. Hopkins, L. A. Judd, John Mann, J. H. Thompson, Alexander Travis, K. F. Towle, J. E. Thompson, and Charles Whitehead, were appointed jurymen and selected the last named as their foreman.

Several witnesses were placed on the stand and testified as to the killing, while others were examined as to their knowledge of the characters of the murdered man and of his assassin. The prisoner was asked if he had a statement to make.

"Yes, I have a few words to say," he responded. "Wild Bill killed my brother and I killed him. Wild Bill threatened to kill me if I ever crossed his path. I am not sorry for what I done; if I had to I would do the same thing over again."

This story of Jack McCall's to the effect that Wild Bill had killed his brother was, it was disclosed at a later day, the invention of Judge

Miller, his counsel. At the trial, Judge Miller made the following appeal to the jury:

"Men, comrades, you have been chosen to decide the guilt and punishment of one of your own companions. Look upon the honest countenance of this poor boy who is being tried for his life because he struck down the assassin of a dearly beloved brother. Note, particularly, that unflinching and innocent eye, which could not possibly belong to a man who could do any wrong."

One of the comments of a correspondent who was present at the trial was to the effect that "the eye, face, and in fact everything about the prisoner denoted villainy and iniquity as an innate part of his nature."

Colonel May made an eloquent speech as the prosecutor.

"If this is not murder, then there never was murder committed," he said in part. "The deceased in his bloody winding-sheet from his mountain grave demands that a proper punishment be meted out to his villainous assassin."

It was currently reported that the jury first stood one for conviction and eleven for acquittal. Indeed, one lenient juror proposed that the prisoner be fined twenty-five dollars. After being out for one hour and thirty minutes the jury handed in the following verdict: "We, the jurors, find the prisoner, Mr. John McCall, not guilty."—*Charles Whitehead*, foreman.

And so ended the farcical trial of the murderer of Wild Bill Hickok. It was charged that the jury had been bought, but it is quite unlikely that this was the case. Judge Muller's able defence, coupled with the fact that the taking of a human life was not then considered a heinous offence, doubtless prompted the jury to bring in the absurd verdict recorded.

Jack McCall's acquittal, however, did not finish the case. At the conclusion of the trial, Colonel May announced that two hundred ounces of gold dust had been surreptitiously passed to and accepted by the jury. Furthermore, he declared he would follow the assassin until justice was done.

As soon as McCall was released he left Deadwood and went to Laramie, Wyoming. While intoxicated one day he made the statement that Wild Bill had never killed his brother; that his entire defence had been invented by his counsel. As he was now in a region where law prevailed, he was arrested and arraigned before Judge Blair, who held him for trial at Yankton. He was brought to the bar in the following January. The court appointed General W. H. H. Beadle and Oliver Shannon as counsel for the defendant. They pleaded in his behalf the clause in the constitution which provides that no man shall be put in jeopardy of life or limb twice for the same offence; but it was decided that this did not govern in this case, for the reason that the trial at Deadwood was illegal and therefore not recognized by law.

When Jack McCall was on the witness stand the attorney for the prosecution subjected him to a grilling cross-examination.

"Why didn't you go in front of Wild Bill and

shoot him in the face like a man?" he asked coldly.

"I didn't want to commit suicide," replied McCall, amid laughter.

This was a significant compliment to Wild Bill's pistolry.

After a trial which continued for several days, beginning November 27, 1876, McCall was finally found guilty of murder in the first degree. An appeal was taken to the territorial Supreme Court, but the verdict of the trial court was affirmed. Jack McCall was duly sentenced to death and he was hanged on March 1, 1877.

On the day following the execution U. S. Marshal Burdick received the following letter:

Louisville, Kentucky, February 25, 1877.

To the Marshal of Yankton:

DEAR SIR:

I saw in the morning papers a piece about the sentence of the murderer of Wild Bill, Jack McCall. There was a young man of the name of

John McCall left here about six years ago, who has not been heard from for the last three years. He has a father, mother, and three sisters living here in Louisville, who are very uneasy about him since they heard about the murder of Wild Bill. If you can send us any information about him, we would be very thankful to you.

This John McCall is about twenty-five years old, has light hair, inclined to curl, and one eye crossed. I cannot say about his height, as he was not grown when he left here. Please write as soon as convenient, as we are very anxious to hear from you.

Very respectfully,
(*Signed*) MARY A. MCCALL.

This letter was from a sister of Wild Bill's assassin. Jack McCall had left home six years previously, a mere boy. He had turned gambler and ruffian, and had trodden the primrose path that leads to the scaffold.

THE END

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